MIRZA GHALIB
BY
MALIK RAM

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Introduction

Babur, the King of Kabul, invaded India when Ibrahim Lodi was ruling the major portion of Northern India. Certain dissatisfied elements at Ibrahim's court had invited Babur to come to their rescue and overthrow this last king of the Lodi dynasty. Babur had already cast a covetous eye on the rich and fertile plains of India and had been waiting for a favourable opportunity to come down from his rocky and unfriendly mountainous capital. When he received this welcome invitation, he readily accepted it and crossed the frontier with a handful of his warriors. The decisive battle against Ibrahim Lodi and his army was fought at Panipat on 21 March 1526. Ibrahim's army was routed and he himself died on the battle-field. Thus was laid the foundation-stone of the Mughal Empire in India on that day at Panipat.

Victory at Panipat though decisive could not be regarded as the conquest of India. Babur lived for about four years only after this. And most of his time was spent in fighting chieftains and rulers of smaller principalities and kingdoms. When he died in 1530 and was succeeded by his eldest son Humayun, the newly-founded empire was still far from secure or stable. Circumstances conspired against Humayun and eventually he had to flee the country and migrate to Iran. In his absence, Sher Shah Suri founded a new dynasty which due to the weakness and inaptitude of his successors proved to be short-lived. In the meantime Humayun had succeeded in persuading

the King of Iran to provide him with military aid to regain his lost kingdom. Humayun came down with his Iranian army in 1555 and after inflicting a crushing defeat on Salim Shah, who had succeeded his father Sher Shah Suri in 1545, regained the throne of India. This time there was no going back. Mughal rule in India continued uninterrupted for the next 300 years.

Humayun was succeeded by his son, Akbar the Great in 1556. He was a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth I of England. Both of them were highly successful rulers and have lasting achievements to their credit. Akbar's half a century's rule is one of the most glorious periods in Indian history. The country advanced in all fields of life. Peace and prosperity at home and popularity and prestige abroad were the order of the day. The royal court at Agra became a Mecca of all fortuneseekers—savants and litterateurs, soldiers and diplomats, of Iran and other countries in West Asia, and before long, Akbar's fame had spread as far as Europe. There was thus a continuous stream of new arrivals which maintained the tempo of progress by infusing fresh blood into the body politic and the cultural set-up of Indian society.

After Akbar the material prosperity of the Empire continued unabated for another three generations. And though signs of weaknesses in the Mughal system were apparent in the reigns of Jahangir and Shahjahan, it was only after Aurangzeb had ascended the throne that the malaise became actually pronounced. No great military achievement can be put down to the credit of Jahangir, Shah Jahan or Aurangzeb. In fact, during the reign of Aurangzeb we find a decline in the imperial power to such an extent that the emperor had to spend the last twenty years of his life on the battle fields of the Deccan wherefrom he did not return and died at Ahmadnagar in

February 1707. The next 150 years till 1857 when Bahadur Shah II, the last of the Mughals, was dethroned by the British and sent as a prisoner to Rangoon saw a steady decline in the fortunes of the royal family. The first serious blow to Mughal power in India was delivered by Nadir Shah, the King of Iran, who invaded India and after defeating the opposing forces occupied and ransacked the imperial capital in 1739. Hardly the country had recovered from this blow when Ahmad Shah Abdali came down with his hordes and repeated his predecessor's performance in 1761. After this though the Mughal dynasty continued for nearly another century, the royal power gradually declined and finally became confined to Delhi alone. Gradually, far-flung provinces of the Empire declared their independence one by one under local chieftains who at time or another had been sent there by the King himself as Governors or army commanders.

Family

In its later phases, the Mughal court at Delhi was in no position to offer any attractive career or position of prestige and protection to any foreigner. Consequently, the flow of these fortune-hunters was considerably retarded till it was reduced to a mere trickle. Among the mercenary elements who were ever ready to pledge their swords and services to the highest bidder, was a Turkoman soldier of fortune Quqan Beg Khan who arrived in India from Samarkand in the middle of the eighteenth century. Indications are that he was well-connected and came of a respectable stock which had seen better days in the past. He first attached himself to Mo'in-ul-Mulk the Governor of Panjab. After a short stay at Lahore he moved to Delhi and became a protege of Zulfaqar-ud-Dawlah Mirza

Najaf Khan on whose recommendation he entered the service of Shah Alam II. The king made him a commander of 50 horses with honour of drum and flag. At the same time, the fertile estate of Pahasu (District Bulandshahar) was conferred upon him to defray his own expenses and those of his troops. These conditions were, however, not very attractive, nor was there any prospect of improvement for a really ambitious man. Consequently, he left the imperial service and joined the forces of the Maharaja of Jaipur. It is not known how long he served at Jaipur but shortly after this we find him settled in Agra.

Quqan Beg Khan had a large family of whom we know the names of two of his sons only, Abdullah Beg Khan and Nasrullah Beg Khan. Like their father both of them chose the army as their career. The younger, Nasrullah Beg Khan entered the service of the Marathas and gradually rose to be the Governor of Agra Fort under General Perron, a mercenary Frenchman in the service of the Maharaja of Gwalior.

The elder brother, Abdullah Beg Khan was not so lucky. He first went to Lucknow. This was the time when Asaf-ud-Dawlah (1775-1797) was the Nawab Vazir. Apparently he did not find a firm footing here and soon after left for Hyderabad where Nawab Nizam Ali Khan was the ruler. He succeeded in securing a small post here and remained in the Deccan for a number of years. In time he lost this job too as a result of some domestic feud among the grandees of the Nizam's court. Thereafter he came to Alwar and served under Maharao Bakhtawar Singh (1791-1803). As ill luck would have it, he was killed shortly afterwords in a local rising which he had been sent out to quell. All these details are contained in a letter written by Ghalib. He writes :

During the political unrest that was prevalent about the time my grandfather died, the estate of Pahasu was resumed. 'Abdullah Beg Khan my father went to Lucknow and entered the service of Nawab Asaf-ud-Dawlah. A short while later he proceeded to Hyderabad and served Nawab Nizam Ali Khan at the head of 300/400 cavalry. He stayed there for many years. This post he lost as a result of some internecine quarrel. Greatly perturbed at this, he now headed for Alwar, took service with Rao Raja Bakhtawar Singh and was killed there in some rising.

Abdullah Beg Khan had married into the family of Ghulam Husain Khan, a retired commander of the Mughal army. At the time of his death, he had three children : one daughter and two sons. The elder boy was the famous poet Ghalib whose original name was Asadullah Beg Khan. He was born at Agra on 27 December 1797. His younger brother Yusuf Ali Khan was two years his junior; the girl was the eldest of the three children. Even before the death of 'Abdullah Beg Khan the family was living at Agra. On account of the roaming life 'Abdullah Beg Khan led they could not permanently stay with him anywhere and Ghalib's mother therefore continued living with her parents at Agra. They were a fairly affluent people and possessed extensive immovable property some of which can still be seen today. After the death of 'Abdullah Beg Khan in 1802 when Ghalib was barely four years old, the family came under the protection of his elder younger Nasrullah Beg Khan.

This was the time when British power was rapidly advancing in northern India. The British reduced local principalities and states, big and small, and extended their sphere of influence and possessions. Lord Lake, the British

Commander-in-Chief reached Agra in 1803 when Nasrullah Beg Khan was the commander of the fort. At the instance of Nawab Ahmad Bakhsh Khan whose sister he had married, he surrendered the fort to Lord Lake. For this signal service he was made a commander of 400 horse under the British with a salary of Rs. 1700 per mensem for his own and that of his troops' maintenance. Nasrullah Beg Khan subsequently annexed the two districts of Sonk and Sunsa in the vicinity of Bharatpur which at the time formed a part of Indore State. When Lord Lake came to know of this he bestowed the two districts on Nasrullah Beg Khan for life. This would naturally mean a life of comparative comfort and ease to the bereaved family of his late brother which was under his protection. Unfortunately this state of affairs did not last long. In 1806 he fell from an elephant and succumbed to his injuries. Ghalib and his brother were still children. This untimely death of their uncle left them guardianless a second time.

Nawab Ahmad Bakhsh Khan had by this time become the ruler of the two small principalities of Ferozepur Jhirka and Loharu. The former had been bestowed upon him by the British and the latter by Maharao Bakhtawar Singh of Alwar, On account of his relations with the late Nasrullah Beg Khan he now took these children under his own care and also persuaded Lord Lake to grant a pension of Rs. 10,000 per annum to the family of the late Nasrullah Beg Khan for their maintenance. Surprisingly he received another order a month later reducing the sum of pension from Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 5,000 per annum. Moreover the new allotment was distributed in such a way that a certain Khwaja Haji got the lion's share of Rs. 2000 per annum and the balance was assigned to the six remaining members of the family. Ghalib's share in this was a paltry Rs. 750 per annum.

Ghalib's mother was still living with her parents. It is uncertain when her father died. According to the tenets of Islam a daughter is a co-heir with her brothers in the property left by their father at the time of his death. Though this rule is not universally observed yet most of the orthodox Muslim families still adhere to it. There is a likelihood therefore that she inherited her share of the property left by her father Ghulam Husain Khan. And this must have been substantial. Ghalib could not therefore have been in want as long as she lived.

Education, Early Years

With the inception of Islam the *Quran* become the centre of all knowledge for the Muslims. Even the curriculum was framed with an eye on the *Quranic* and religious teachings. Only such subjects were taught to the student which helped him in later life to understand the basic teachings of the religion and trained him to perceive out the truth and beauty of Islam's teachings. The mosque was practically the only seat of learning in every village and town. The priest who led the congregational prayers was also a teacher in his spare time. Children of the locality gathered daily at a fixed hour in the mosque and were taught by him to read the *Quran* and other elementary texts. In due course bigger schools and colleges were established where advanced and more specialised subjects were taught. This pattern of teaching prevailed in all Muslim countries.

When the Muslims came to India they brought this system with them. Here too generally the mosque of the locality served as a school. Children flocked to the mosque and the *maulvi* taught them all the subjects. Such a school

was called a *maktab*. This institution has not died out completely; in small villages it can be seen even today.

In due course houses of the more wealthy and influential section of the population also become instrumental in spreading knowledge. The rich man who had a son of school going age he would consider it below his dignity and status to send the child to a mosque where he would have to sit with other children of the town no matter who they were. In order to avoid such a situation, he would engage a special tutor to come home to teach his son. Gradually children of his friends or people of his position would also begin to come to his house for the same purpose; and thus a small school would be founded. Regular schools were few and far between and these were always either subsidised by the Government or run by a religious trust. Sometimes an enterprising scholar would himself establish a school at his residence. He and some of his learned friends would constitute the teaching staff and thus knowledge would be imparted to those whose parents had confidence in him.

Very meagre evidence is a available about Ghalib's education. We know that at the time Mohammad Mu'azzam a scholar of some repute kept a school in Agra. Ghalib also was sent to this school. Persian was the court language and universal medium of correspondence and literary activities. It was only natural that all text books should be in Persian. Urdu as yet had not yet attained the position when it could claim to be taught in schools. Ghalib too during his school days learned only Persian. This system remained current till the beginning of this century. It is believed that at this school he read some prose and poetical works of a few classical Persian writers. In the early stages only very elementary Arabic was taught and Ghalib could not have proceeded beyond that

stage. He probably remained at this school till about the age of 12.

Ghalib has written that at about this time a Persian scholar Abdus Samad arrived in Agra. Abdus Samad had been born in the Zoroastrian faith and through his study had voluntarily embraced Islam. He was an accomplished scholar of both Persian and Arabic. It was therefore natural that he should have a thorough knowledge of Zoroastrianism and Islam. The young poet was greatly impressed by this scholar-traveller and prevailed upon him to stay with his family for about two years (1810-12). He studied under his guidance during this period and acquired the knowledge that served him so well for the rest of his life. Both left Agra for Delhi in 1812-13, Ghalib permanently to settle here and Abdus Samad to say good-bye to his pupil and young friend. Ghalib had been such a diligent and inteligent pupil that we are told he kept up correspondence with him even after he had left India.

Arrival in Delhi

We do not know what prompted the poet to leave Agra and settle down in Delhi permanently. Till the time of Shah Jahan, Agra was the capital of Mughal Empire. It was Shah Jahan who had built the Red Fort in Delhi and transferred the seat of Government from Agra to Delhi in 1646. Agra continued to be an important city of the Empire but naturally could no longer vie with Delhi. It is quite likely that the central position of Delhi proved too much of an attraction to Ghalib and he decided to make this city his permanent home. However there may have been another reason for the move. August 1810 when he was 13 years of age he married the daughter of Ilahi Bakhsh Khan, the younger brother of Nawab Ahmad

Bakhsh Khan of Ferozepur Jhirka and Loharu. These people lived in Delhi and it is possible that they persuaded him to come over and settle down in Delhi.

The Loharu ruling family was founded by Nawab Ahmad Bakhsh Khan. Indications are that Nawab Ahmad Bakhsh Khan's father Mirza 'Arif Jan along with his two brothers had come to India at the same time in middle of the eighteenth century when Ghalib's grand-father Quqan Beg Khan had migrated from Central Asia. It has already been mentioned that Nawab Ahmad Bakhsh's sister was married to Ghalib's uncle, Nasrullah Beg Khan. This also shows that there probably subsisted close relationship between the two families which prompted them to further strengthen it by entering into another matrimonial alliance.

In the beginning Ahmad Bakhsh Khan was dealing in horses on a large scale. After a while he came into touch with the Maharaja of Gwalior and gave up his business. However, he did not stay with the Maharaja for a long time and went to Alwar. He very soon earned the full confidence of the ruler of Alwar, so much so that he appointed him commander of the forces which had been sent by him to help Lord Lake in his campaign against the Marathas. By his bravery and sound judgment, he made himself an invaluable asset to Lord Lake who trusted him implicitly to the extent that practically every decision relating to Indian Princes and States was taken by him in consultation with Ahmad Bakhsh Khan. When in 1803 Lord Lake conquered the vast areas of Western U.P., he bestowed upon Ahmad Bakhsh Khan the districts of Ferozepur Jhirka, Palwal, Hodal, etc. The Maharao of Alwar who was present at the investiture *darbar* in order not to appear less appreciative bestowed upon him the principality of Loharu in recognition of his meritorious and faithful services. Thus

Ahmad Bakhsh Khan became the first ruler of Ferozepur Jhirka and Loharu.

Although the seat of his Government was Ferozepur, Nawab Ahmad Bakhsh Khan spent most of his time in Delhi which the British had made their administrative headquarters for the Northern districts. Ilahi Bakhsh Khan, younger brother of the Nawab, was a permanent resident of Delhi. Ilahi Bakhsh Khan was not only a poet of standing but he was also fairly well known in the religious circles. He wrote Urdu poetry under the *nom de plume* of Ma'roof.

Urdu Language

The development of Urdu had received a great impetus as a result of close contacts between the Muslims and the people of this country. A language passes through many phases of development before it takes a definite shape. This process had been going on in northern India for a very long time and had reached a stage when a new language was bound to emerge. It is an accident that at this juncture the Muslims appeared on the scene. They brought with them Persian, another language of the Aryan stock which had great and rich literary traditions behind it and also the additional advantage of being the language of the conquerors. Quite naturally, Persian was adopted as the court language and it filtered down to the educated classes who began learning it with a view to finding favour and service with their new rulers. The ferment which had for long been going on in the linguistic cauldron boiled over now under the influence and impact of Persian and gave birth to a new language which in course of time came to be known as Urdu. The new language would have emerged any way because the process for its birth had been completed. Only a spark was needed which was provided

by the Muslims who came in full vigour from across the North-Western borders. This new language was essentially Indian in all respects—its vocabulary, turn of phrase and grammar. All its verbs were derived from Indian sources. The Muslim contribution was limited to its script, a small percentage of Persian words and some Iranian concepts and idioms.

In the beginning this language was used mostly for religious discourses and propaganda by Muslims saints. Early Urdu writings both prose and poetry are imbued with ethical and moral sentiments. As most writers were also scholars of Persian they drew heavily on Persian ideas and thought content. With the passing of time, the language attained more exactness and, borrowing from classical Persian, became more broad-based. Nevertheless, it was all artificial as the poets in India who employed Persian usages and similes had never been to Iran and their knowledge was derived from classical texts only. Their poetry was a product of pure imagination and artificiality and except for a couple of poets like Meer and Dard most of the Urdu poets continued writing on the same lines without originality or fresh thinking.

Beginning as a Poet

Ghalib began writing poetry at a very early age while he was still at school in Agra. Initially he wrote both in Persian but very soon dropped Persian and confined himself entirely to Urdu which was steadily gaining ground and popularity with the educated classes. His schooling had consisted mostly of classical Persian. Later his contact with Abdus Samad further confirmed him as a scholar and lover of Persian. From his early childhood he was greatly attracted by Persian poets like Shawkat Bukhari, Aseer

and Bedil. These poets are well known for their abstract and imaginative writings. Ghalib began emulating their style in Urdu which was not merely a new language but as yet did not even possess an effective vocabulary and phraseology to suit his ideas, especically since he was taking his inspiration from these Persian poets, particularly Bedil, who is probably the most difficult and elusive poet of the Persian language in both theme and form. The result was not very happy. The early poetry of Ghalib is mostly couched in a language which except for a word here and there is entirely Persian. Many a time a very insignificant and unimportant idea has been expressed in a complicated and involved style which makes it unintelligible. Naturally, this provoked a lot of adverse criticism from his contemporaries who dubbed his compositions as meaningless. The charge is by and large true; most of the early writings which have come down to us are difficult to follow and very often illustrate the saying that a mountain in labour brings forth a mouse.

Fortunately, however, this opposition did not succeed in dampening the spirit of the young poet. He continued writing in his high-flown style undaunted and undismayed. If there were those who opposed and criticised him, there were also others who praised him for his originality and innovations. One such admirer was Nawab Husam-ud-Dawlah, a great nobleman and himself a poet. Once on a visit to Lucknow, he took with him some Urdu *ghazals* written by Ghalib to show them to the great poet Meer who was now too old to go out and usually stayed at home. When the renowned poet was shown the *ghazals*, he remarked laconically that if a competent mentor ustad could be found to guide the young boy he would become a great poet ; otherwise he was doomed to write meaningless prattle.

Ghalib, however had no *ustad*, and though some of his sincere friends coutioned him now and then, he relied on his commonsense to guide him. He was a prolific writer and the story about Meer proves that he had succeeded in making his mark very early. We know that Meer died on 20 September 1810 when Ghalib was not even 13 years of age. He had begun writing poetry at the early age of ten or eleven. In other words, all told he had been writing for two or three years when his *ghazals* were shown to Meer. The place of Meer in the history of Urdu literature in general and poetry in particular is unrivalled. It is an accepted fact that in *ghazal*-writing he is in a class by himself and all the masters subsequent to him have acknowledged him as a poet *par excellence*. The very fact that someone dared carrying Ghalib's *ghazals* to Meer becomes all the more significant because the latter's utter contempt for his contemporaries is wellknown. He is one poet who seldom paid heed to a second-rate poet or his poetry. Nawab Husam-ud-Dawlah was himself a pupil of Meer; nobody could therefore know Meer's temperament better. His taking Ghalib's *ghazals* to him shows that not only was he himself an admirer of Ghalib's talents but he was also sure of the reception he would receive from Meer. And then Meer's remark is typical of him. His correct estimate of Ghalib is evidence of the great master' critical acumen.

The tradition of a mentor (*ustad*) and pupil (*shagird*) in Urdu poetry came from Iran. When a young man began writing he would generally approach a veteran poet for guidance. Whatever he wrote he would show to the older poet, who would not only correct his writings but would also teach him the niceties of the language and the technique of poetry. The tradition was so firmly rooted that it was nearly impossible for any poet not to have a guide. Very often the pupil continued showing his compositions

to the master as long as the latter lived. Ghalib never had a teacher in the accepted sense of the word. We do not know if in the initial stages he had consulted anyone. We, however, do know that in later life he claimed that the art of poetry was a divine gift to him. The prophecy of Meer thus proved to be partially correct. There was no regular teacher in Ghalib's case except his common-sense to guide him, nonetheless he became a great poet.

Most likely immediately on arrival in Delhi, he put up with his wife's family. From a Persian letter of his it would appear that in due course he purchased a house of his own and shifted to it. However, we do not know how long he stayed with Ilahi Bakhsh Khan, his father-in-law. This proved to be of great advantage to him all the same.

In those days, the residences of most of the rich and learned people were, like the *salons* of noblemen in Europe, the meeting-places for scholars, poets and artists. They were patronised by the host who took it upon himself to protect and advance their interests. Ghalib's stay in Delhi at that young age and his close relationship with such an influential and well-known family helped him to get introduced at once to the elite of Delhi society. These associations proved of immense service to him subsequently. Amongst the acquaintances he made at this time were scholars and poets, statesmen and theologians, saints and politicians who in later life stood by him through thick and thin and he thus profited by their help.

Pension Dispute

He was a young man now with a family to support. As long as he was in Agra, his mother looked after him and it is possible that she continued doing so even after his shifting to Delhi. Nawab Ahmad Bakhsh Khan also

proffered him help whenever he needed it. All this, however, was uncertain and of a sporadic nature—his only permanent income was his share of Rs. 750 per annum in the family pension of Rs. 5,000 granted by the British after the death of his uncle, Nasrullah Beg Khan. It did not take long for circumstances to take a turn for the worse.

Nawab Ahmad Bakhsh Khan had three sons,, the eldest of whom Shams-ud-Din Ahmad Khan fell foul of the rest of his family. The young man's reaction was full of hatred and venom towards all of them. As he was the natural heir of Ahmad Bakhsh Khan, the Nawab feared that after his death the two younger boys might be illtreated by their elder brother who would naturally be in a position of power and influence. With a view to guarding against such an eventuality and presenting the British and his own *family* with a *fait accompli*, he abdicated in 1826 and made Shams-ud-Din Ahmad Khan the ruler of Ferozepur Jhirka and Loharu with the proviso that all income accruing from Loharu would be paid to the two younger sons. This arrangement had a decisive influence on Ghalib's affairs. By the arrangement of 1806, the annual pension of Rs. 5,000 was paid to him and his family from the revenues of the two principalities of Ferozepur Jhirka and Loharu. Henceforth Shams-ud-Din Ahmad Khan became the paymaster. As he did not see eye to eye with his two younger brothers and Ghalib was a close friend and well-wisher of theirs, he became antagonistic and started putting all sorts of impediments in the way of Ghalib getting his share in time and ultimately stopped paying it altogether.

An Affair

It is about this time that we come across an event of emotional attachment which left a lasting impression upon

his mind. He was young, not more than 25 years of age, healthy and handsome and in fairly affluent circumstances. The society in which he lived and moved not only did not object to one's having a concubine or mistress, but to a great extent it was considered as a symbol of status for the gentry of the day. We find all classes of people—scholars, statesmen, theologians, and grandees of the court—having dancing girls and concubines permanently attached to their households. In a degenerate society, the moral fibre of the people usually becomes weak and cosequently it always allows a wide latitude to its members. From the beginning of the eighteenth century, the political power of the central Government at Delhi had steadily declined. Whatever influence and prestige the later kings of the Mughal dynasty enjoyed was entirely due to the glory and fame of their forefathers and not their own. Till the time of Aurangzeb, the successive occupants of the throne were men of a high calibre, great administrators, intellectually well-equipped and essentially men of action. Each one of them would readily rise to the occasion if called upon to do so. The result was that the Empire not only expanded geographically but it was also kept well-knit and united in power and prosperity. The treasury was full and the army well trained and fully satisfied. After the death of Aurangzeb, different parts of the vast Empire gradually threw off the yoke of the central Government; courtiers at the capital intrigued against one another with a view to gaining positions of power and profit with the king. In the face of these warring sections, a situation of insecurity prevailed all round. Everybody had plenty of free time and no one knew how utilze this to in any gainful occupation. Politicians had the upper hand and in spite of profuse protestations, religion and morality were thrown overboard. In

such circumstances everyone wanted to drown his worries in drink, dice and dancing girls.

We do not know to what class this lady with whom he had fallen in love belonged. In a letter he wrote long afterwards, he obviously refers to this affair. He calls her a *domni* which would mean a dancing and singing girl. If this inference is correct, then it would appear that she died young as there is an elegy in his early poetry which most probably was written to mourn her death. It runs as follows :

1. You are restless because of my suffering, alas! Why so, you had never cared for anything, alas!
2. If you didn't have the heart to stand suffering Why did you ever show me any sympathy, alas!
3. Why did you ever think of befriending me?
   Friendship for me was nothing but enmity to yourself, alas!
4. You had sworn life-long faithfulness to me
   But this life itself is so short-lived, alas!
5. Environments of my life are nothing but poison to me
   Because they were not in accord with you, alas!
6. What has become of the flowers of your charms?
   You have wasted them in the dust, alas!
7. For fear of scandal to take on dust's veil
   That was an extreme step to hide your love, alas!
8. Sanctity of love's vows has gone to dust,
   Who can now ever trust love's troth, alas!
9. The arm of the swordsman went out of action
   Ere he could deliver a deadly blow, alas!
10. How can one pass dark rainy nights?
    My eyes were accustomed to remain awake with stars. Alas!

11. Ears without a message and eyes without a glimpse of beauty
How can the heart stand all this disappointment? Alas!
12. Ghalib! love had as yet not deepened into infatuation.
Whatever desires I had of love remained unfulfilled, alas!

It would appear that she belonged to a respectable set, as the poem implies that she had probably committed suicide fearing their affair had become a scandal in the eyes of her people and the public at large. If she were a common public woman, there should have been no question of a scandal or dishonour to drive her to take her own life. This early love affair left a permanent impression upon his young heart. In the social conditions of his time, it is likely that he contracted other such sentimental attachments too but nothing definite has come down to us.

Living in such a social milieu Ghalib could not escape the influence of his surroundings. He began drinking, occasionally took a hand at gambling as well and as said above had a keep in the bargain. These habits could not be kept up without a regular flow of sufficient funds. Unfortunately he did not have these. As long as his mother was alive in Agra she must have kept him provided with adequate funds. Due to family associations and moral commitments, Ahmad Bakhsh Khan also looked after him more or less satisfactorily. After the Nawab's abdication, however, things took a turn for the worse. Ghalib's financial position worsened rapidly and he ran into heavy debts. In such circumstances, one always looks for scapegoats.

Pension Case

As mentioned earlier, the first order passed by Lord Lake after the death of Ghalib's uncle, Nasrullah Beg Khan, in May 1806 was for the payment of Rs. 10,000 per annum to the bereaved family. Subsequently, Nawab Ahmad Bakhsh Khan had somehow got this order revised whereby the sum was halved and also the name of one Khwaja Haji included among the recipients. Ghalib was ignorant of this second order. He still believed that the grant amounted to Rs. 10,000 per annum. Now that his financial condition became tight, it dawned upon him that all these years a wrong had been done to him and his family as instead of Rs. 10,000 a sum of Rs. 5,000 only had been paid. And what was more, an outsider who had no claim to entitle him to be counted among Nasrullah Beg Khan's family was made a co-sharer in this legacy. Even that was objectionable but to add insult to injury, he got the lion's share out of the endowment. With a view to getting this mistake rectified. Ghalib at first instance approached Nawab Ahmad Bakhsh Khan, who tried to pacify him with the promise that justice would be done. However, no positive step was taken by the Nawab. Ghalib got impatient and decided to proceed to Calcutta to prefer his claim before the Supreme Government as the pension was originally granted by Lord Lake.

Journey to Calcutta

After a long and arduous journey *via* Kanpur, Lucknow, Banda, Allahabad, Banaras, Murshidabad, etc., he reached Calcutta early in February 1828. He presented his first application to the Governor-General-in-Council towards the end of the following April. He made the following requests :

1. Lord Lake had sanctioned a maintenance grant of Rs. 10,000 per annum to the bereaved family of the late Nasrullah Beg Khan in May 1806. Instead a sum of Rs. 5,000 only has been paid so far. Payment of the original sum of Rs. 10,000 be ordered.

2. The pension was meant for the family of Nasrullah Beg Khan but an outsider (Khwaja Haji) who had no connection either with Nasrullah Beg Khan or his family had been included amongst the payees and now after his death his two sons had been made the recipients of their father's share. This be stopped.

3. The difference of Rs. 5,000 per annum between the Rs. 10,000 originally granted and the Rs. 5,000 actually paid be counted and all arrears paid to the family. This should also include the sum of Rs. 2000 per annum wrongly paid to Khwaja Haji.

4. In future the pension should be paid from the British Treasury and not by the Ferozepur Jhirka State.

Nawab Ahmad Bakhsh Khan died in October 1827: this news had reached Ghalib in the course of his journey at Murshidabad. Obviously now the case was between Ghalib and the late Nawab's eldest son Shams-ud-Din Ahmad Khan who had become the ruler of Ferozepur Jhirka even in his father's life-time. Shams-ud-Din Ahmed Khan in reply presented the second order of Lord Lake whereby the original sum of Rs. 10,000 had been reduced to Rs. 5,000. With a view to proving that the claim of Rs. 10,000 and his request for the payment of arrears were justified, Ghalib contended that this second order was a forgery or at best had been procured by some dubious means. His argument was that no copy of it existed in any official record either in Calcutta or in Delhi in spite of the

fact that authentic copies of all documents were invariably preserved in official records. Secondly, this document was in Persian and should have borne the signature of Lord Lake or at least of his Secretary on the reverse which was also customry in such cases. The document presented by Shams-ud-Din Ahmad Khan did not bear this signature. It was clear therefore that this document was not authentic and therefore of no value he argued. And finally, in any case it could not cancel the previous order granting Rs. 10,000 per annum which had been issued under the signature of Lord Lake and approved by the Governor-General-in-Council and a copy of which was on record in the Calcutta office.

Ghalib's plea was so well founded and so well argued that George Swinton, the Chief Secretary to the Government of India, was fully convinced that the document presented by the Nawab was not genuine and therefore Ghalib's claim should be accepted. As, at the time these *jagirs* and grants were conferred Sir John Malcolm was the secretary of Lord Lake, the document was sent for his comments at Bombay where he was now the Lieutenant-Governor. Sir John Malcolm instead of meeting Ghalib's arguments expressed the opinion that Nawab Ahmad Bakhsh Khan was an honourable gentleman and a confident of Lord Lake. It was, therefore, unimaginable, he said, that he would stoop to forge a document like that. Basing his argument on that fact, Sir John concluded that the document must be authentic and should be accepted in evidence. At this, the Governor-General-in-Council decided that the Government was not prepared to accept any alteration in the existing arrangements. In other words, Ghalib's case was dismissed.

Ghalib had not waited for the final verdict of the Governor-General-in-Council. He left Calcutta and returned to

Calcutta: Cultural Influence

Another effect of this journey to Calcutta was the healthy influence it had on his outlook on life. Calcutta at the time was the most advanced city in India. On account of the introduction of British rule, most modern and up-to-date scientific inventions had become quite common. Calcutta harbour was humming with activity where vessels from four corners of the world called with wares and cargoes of distant lands. The English society living in Calcutta had itself brought about a great change in the staid and lethargic oriental atmosphere. The Fort William College established at the beginning of the nineteenth century had produced a large number of Urdu books in the original and translations from English and some oriental languages which set a new style in Urdu prose. Calcutta had a large colony of Iranian businessmen and travellers with whom Ghalib came in close contact which enabled him to learn modern Persian. All these things combined to change his outlook not only on literature but also on life itself—social, political and economic.

Thus, it will be seen that though he failed in the primary purpose for which he had undertaken this long and not very comfortable journey, he gained a good deal intellectually and in general knowledge. On account of the influence of Persian, Urdu prose was still heavy and replete with Persian idioms and terminology. This was natural. Most Urdu writers of the time were educated in Persian and though under the stress of cirumstances they had begun writing in Urdu, they still had scant respect for this new language. Most of their work continued to be done in Presian and even when they condescended to use Urdu as the medium of expression, they could not shake off their Persian background. Fort William College was the first institution to

strike a new path in Urdu prose. Its object essentially was to provide suitable text books for the young recruits (*writers*) who entered the service of the East India Company in England and came to India as a part of the Government machinery. They had to learn Urdu which was the common man's medium of conversation. Lord Wellesley founded this College where *writers* fresh from England were taught Urdu. To prepare the text books, a number of writers and poets were engaged from different parts of the country either to translate books from the Persian and the Arabic or to produce original works. Of necessity the language of these writings had to be simple and nearer to the language of conversation. There are indications that Ghalib had read some of these books. Opinion has been expressed that he was influenced by the English style of letter-writing which goes direct to its subject without any long-winded introduction as was the common practice in classical Persian and Urdu. This is not correct, however. Even before going to Calcutta when he was doing all his work in Persian, Ghalib had expressed himself against this mode of writing and shown his preference for discarding the unnecessary trammels in vogue at that time. Nonetheless, it is true that this reading of the simple and direct prose produced by the Fort William College did prove to be a salutary experience and if nothing else it confirmed him in his earlier opinion.

He reached Delhi at the end of February 1829 after an absence of nearly three years.

Tragedy of Shams-ud-Din Ahmad Khan

During his absence from Delhi, things had moved at a rapid pace. As stated already Nawab Ahmad Bakhsh Khan had died in October 1827. Nawab Shams-ud-Din Ahmad

Khan was now firmly installed in the saddle in the two principalities of Ferozepur Jhirka and Loharu. The quarrel between him and his two younger brothers had stiffened and he had begun putting obstacles in the way of the two young boys, preventing them from enjoying the fruits of their patrimony. On account of the suit instituted by Ghalib, his pension which used to be paid from the Ferozepur treasury was altogether stopped. To crown it all, the Nawab developed serious differences with the British Agent, Mr. William Frazer. This led to very unfortunate consequences. Late on the evening of 22 March 1835 when Frazer was returning from a dinner engagement to his residence on the ridge outside the Kashmere Gate in Delhi, he was shot dead. In the investigations that followed Karim, khan an employee of the Nawab, was arrested and charged with murder. Subsequent probing brought new facts to light and pointed to the complicity of the Nawab himself in the crime. Consequently, both of them were brought to trial. The actual murderer was hanged on 26 August 1835. At the same time the trial magistrate reported full facts of the case to the Governor-General at calcutta and recommended that the Nawab should also pay the same penalty for instigating the crime. All efforts by the Nawab to avert this catastrophe proved of no avail. The Governor-General-in-Council accepted the recommendations of the Delhi magistrate and ultimately the Nawab was also hanged on 8 October 1835.

This event changed the situation redically. The State of Ferozepur Jhirka which had been originally bestowed on Ahmad Bakhsh Khan by the British was resumed by the granting authority. The principality of Loharu given by the Maharao of Alwar, however, remained with the family. Shams-ud-Din Ahmad Khan's younger brother, Amin-ud-Din Ahmad Khan, was made the Nawab of Loharu and

it was stipulated that he should give half of the net income of the principality to his younger brother Zia-ud-Din Ahmad Khan, who was a co-sharer in it. And henceforth the payment of Ghilib's pension was made a charge on the Delhi Collectorate.

In the meantime Ghalib's appeal against the decision of the Governor-General-in-Council dismissing his plea that the pension should be increased of Rs. 10,000 per anuum had continued and was finally turned down in 1842 by the Home Authorities in England. Though Ghalib tried to retrieve some of the lost ground even thereafter, it was all in vain; finally in 1844 he accepted defeat.

Of the several demands made by him at the commencement of the case, the one regarding payment of his pension in future from the British Treasury instead of the Ferozepur Jhirka State was automatically accepted, as neither the Nawab nor the State was in existence any more. He had also requested that he be given the honour of attending levees and *darbars* of the Governor-General with robes of honour whenever he attended these. The first request was accepted while he was still in Calcutta during Lord William Bentinck's tenure of office. The robe of honour was conferred upon him during the time of Lord Ellenborough (1842-44) towards the close of the case.

The long drawn-out case which continued for 15 years proved to be a great drain on his meagre resources. To defray the expenses he had to resort to borrowing at usurious rates of interst and had *to suffer great privation later on to repay the debt.*

RELATIONS WITH MUGHAL COURT

Though materially his fortunes were at a very low ebb at this time, he had already acquired a high place amongst the literary circles of the country. We have no direct evidence to show as to how he was introduced at the Mugal Court. When he had shifted from Agra to Delhi, Akber Shah II was the occupant of the royal throne in the Red Fort. After his arrival in Delhi, he most probably stayed with the family of Nawab Ahmad Bakhsh Khan. The Nawab was certainly not only introduced at the royal court, but he must have occupied a position of some influence there. It can be safely presumed therefore that Ghalib's introduction in the royal court also took place through Nawab Ahmad Bakhsh Khan. In the beginning he tried to ingratiate himself into the king's favour. We find a *qasida* in his Persian *diwan* in praise of Akber Shah II at the end of which he has mentioned his heir-apparent Prince Salim as well. This attempt however seems to have been unsucecssful. Akbar Shah II though he has written some poetry, was no lover of the arts or of literature. Ghalib did not therefore cut any ice with him. Akber Shah died in 1837 and was succeeded by Bahadur Shah II. The new king was not only well versed in the Urdu language but he can also claim a permanent place in the history of Urdu literature as a poet of distinction. He used to write under the *nom de plume* of Zafar. Unfortunately, Ghalib could not have access to his court either. From his earlier life when there was no chance of his succeeding to the throne, he had been writing poetry to while away his time. In the beginning the famous Urdu poet Naseer was his guide and mentor in poetry. When at Maharaja Chandulal's invitation Naseer left for Hyderabad (Deccan), Zafar for a while consulted Kazim Ali Beqarar. This association did not last

long either. In 1808 Beqarar also left for the North-West Frontior as a translator with the expedition of Monstuart Elphinstone who was sent by the British to negotiate and conclude a treaty with the Amir of Kabul. With the departure of Beqarar, Zafar now turned to Mohammad Ibrahim Zauq, a young poet who was rapidly coming to the fore in the literary world of the time.

It will be seen therefore that the only avenue of Ghalib getting a foothold at the court had already been bloked even before his arrival in Delhi. Later on if he had tried to find favour with the king not only Zauq and his party would have opposed him, but his earlier *qasida* in praise of Akber Shah II and his son Salim might have proved to be a stumpling block, as both of them had actively worked against Zafar's accession to the throne.

Ghalib was keenly conscious of his worth and pre-eminence, This discomfiture at the hands of poets like Zauq and his coterie must have galled him greatly. His life had been a continuous struggle against odds. His father and after him his uncle had died very early when he was still in his infancy. Thus a long period of insecurity began and he had to look to others for the very means of existence. When he came of age, he discovered that he and his family had been cheated of their due right. To get what was their's instituted a lengthy law suit which he eventually lost at a very heavy cost. It is therefore natural that this should have produced in him a sense of rebellion against a society which tolerated such injustice.

In adverse material circumstances like these, one derives compensatory satisfaction if proper recognition is given for one's intellectual and moral capabilities. No matter how small and insignificant the court of Bahadur Shah II was, it was the only source which could grant this recognition, Even that was denied to him because he was late in arriv-

ing on the scene. It is not surprising, therefore, that the developed a sense of contempt for his contemporary literary world. This ultimately proved to be both a source of strength and of weakness to him—strength because he stopped looking to others for favour and weakness because he failed to adjust himself in adverse circumstances..

URDU *Diwan*

He had no doubt failed to receive official recognition at the court. There were people, however who did recognise his worth and accepted him as a great poet and writer. He steadily gained ground and with diligence and preservance won over a group of scholars and *connoisseurs* to his side. At the instance of a friend, he revised his Urdu *Diwan* and weeded out such verses which were either obtuse in meaning or faulty in composition. His Urdu *Diwan* was published for the first time in 1841, a slim volume containing about 1100 couplets.

This was followed by his Persian *Diwan* which appeared in 1845. This was more voluminous and contained about 6,700 couplets. The publication of these two volumes established his reputation as a poet of Urdu and Persian and he was now accepted by friend and foe alike as a force to reckon with. The Urdu *Diwan* had to be published in a second edition in 1847 which shows how rapidly he had gained popularity in literary circles.

FINANCIAL STRINGENCY

To be accepted as a great poet is one thing, to be able to live comfortably quite another. He had almost always lived beyond his means. As long as his mother was alive she helped him financially. We are not absolutely sure as

to when she died but there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that this event probably took place in 1840. After that quite naturally this source of income dried up. Nawab Ahmad Bakhsh Khan had died in 1827 and whatever help he used to give also ceased after that. The protracted litigation depleted his resources almost wholly and in fact added to his indebtedness. It became therefore essential for him and his friends to look around to obtain additional revenue to relieve him of some of his worries.

Delhi Colllge Episode

In 1840 such an opportunity presented itself but Ghalib failed to take advantage of it. James Thomason who was a Visitor of the Delhi College came on an inspection tour of the College. He remarked that there was no satisfactory arrangement for the teaching of Persian in the College and recommended that this deficiency be made good. Someone pointed out to him that there were three masters of the Persian language in Delhi, *viz.*, Ghalib, the famous Urdu poet Momin and Imam Bakhsh Sahbai, the well-known Persian scholar, and that anyone of them could be persuaded to accept this assignment. Accordingly, Thomason first asked Ghalib to call on him. Thomason in his capacity as Secretary to the Government of India knew Ghalib already and the latter being a *kursi nashin* at official *darbars* was on visiting terms with him. In compliance with Thomason's request, Ghalib went as usual in a *palki* to his residence. When he reached the place, he stopped at the gate waiting for someone to come out to receive him. This was customary in case one holding the honour of attendance at the Governor-General's levees called. Presumably, Thomason had been doing this on previous occasions, whenever Ghalib had called him. On

this occasions however, Ghalib kept waiting and nobody turned up to receive him. After a while Thomason came out himself to enquire as to what prevented Ghalib from alighting and entering the house. On being told about his predicament Thomason remarked that formal reception could be accorded only when he was on an official visit. Now that he had come to see him with a view to seeking employment in the Delhi College he was not entitled to the customary honour. Ghalib's reaction was sharp. He said that he had come to Thomason for the post in the Delhi College in the hope that this would add to his status and gain him more respect in the eyes of his compatriots as well as the British official circles and not to lower himself in their esteem. If the acceptance of the post was tantamount to his losing the honour he already enjoyed, he would rather refuse to accept it. Saying this, he returned to the *palki* and left for home. This event throws a flood of light on his innate character. Since the age of nine when his uncle died in 1806, he had been the recipient of a pension from the British. Every time he attended an official *darbar* (levee) he wrote and perhaps also recited a *qasida* praising the presiding dignitary. He claimed to be a great master of and authority on Persian. And above all financially he was in very strained circumstances. One would normally expect that he would not miss this opportunity and accept the college post which would have pleased his British patrons and established and confirmed him as a Persian scholar and relieved him of his financial worries in the bargain. In spite of all these obvious advantages he haughtily spurned the offer without caring for the consequences simply because Thomason had failed to receive him when he had called at his residence. This shows his sense of inherent pride and self-esteem which he so jealously guarded.

Jail for Gambling

Self-respect and pride weae all right but they could not solve his financial problems. These continued to be as serious as ever. From his early youth he had been used to playing chess and *chauser* with small stakes. It seems in these days of stringency he resorted to playing more seriously. In this he was joined by some wealthy businessmen of the town who began to assemble regularly at his place for gambling. Apparently, this helped him to some extent. The police authorities knew that gambling was rife in the town and wanted to stamp out the evil which was eating into the vitals of society. Everyday some centre of gambling or other was raided and the gamblers rounded up and timed. Ghalib had so far received protection from the *Kotwal* who was a personal friend of his and was fond of literature. He was, however, transferred at this time and the new Inspector of Police, Faizul Hasan Khan, not only had little to do with literature but was very meticulous in the performance of his duties as well. He took it upon himself to remove this evil practice from the town. One day he raided Ghalib's house under the camouflage of lady visitors. He put a few policemen in *palkis* covered on all sides as if *parda nashin* ladies had come to pay a visit to Ghalib's household. Ghalib and his friends were engrossed in gambling. When the policemen reached inside, they caught the gamblers red-handed and arrested them on the spot. Apparently some resistance was offered but this proved of little avail. The rich businessmen somehow escaped through their influence and money but Ghalib being the host was arrested for keeping a gambling-house. He was brought before the magistrate and tried for keeping an establishment in contravention of the law. In spite of all the efforts

of his friends and even the intervention of the king, he was ultimately sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 200 in cash with the provision that if an extra Rs. 50 were paid labour would be remitted and if the fine were not paid, imprisonment would be enhanced to one your. He did not, however, spend the whole six-month *period* in prison and was released after three months on the recommendation of Dr. Ross, the Civil Surgeon of Delhi.

This imprisonment struck a very heavy blow to his personal pride. As the fine had been paid, the imprisonment was nothing but simple confinement. He was treated very leniently by the authorities who knew of his social and literary standing. All his requirements were sent from home and no restriction was placed on the visits of his friends. Nonethless, it was an imprisonment inflicted for a moral offence which was bound to lower him in the eyes of his fellow-citizens and, therefore, he was cut to the quick by this unfortunate event. Society at large could not condone such happenings and looked down upon convicts, no matter what their crime was. The result was that for a long time Ghalib smarted under the pain of this persecution and at one time even thought of migrating to some other land where people would not laugh or jeer at him for what had happened.

What was loss in prestige to him, however, proved to be a great boon to literature. During his imprisonment, he composed a long poem in Persian which is a picture of his inner thoughts and feelings. He wails therein his misfortune and curses his stars and the society which had, despite his greatness, inflicted upon him the agony of being conflned with thieves and crooks of the town. He highly praised those of his friends who had stood by him in his hour of adversity, particularly Nawab Mustafa Khan

Shaifta, a nobleman who was a great friend of his. Shaifta was a poet of Urdu and Persian and used to consult Ghalib in regard to his Persian poetry. He was a great admirer of the poet for his knowledge of the Persian language and praised him greatly for his qualities of head and heart. As soon as he came to know of the arrest, he tried to use his influence on his behalf to effect his release. But he failed in his efforts. Ghalib was prosecuted and sentenced. Shaifta also helped him to defray the expenses of the case. As long as Ghalib remained in Jail, he would pay him a visit every second day and remain with him as long as possible to matigate the pain of incarceration. The poet has paid a glowing tribute to the steadfastness and sincere sympathy of Shaifta in his misfortune.

Court Historian

After his release from prision, he stayed for a time with Maulana Nasir-ud-Din *alias* Mian Kale Sahib, the religious and spiritual mentor of King Bahadur Shah II. All his friends knew that fiancially his position was very precarious. It was imperative that some permanent source of income be found to enable him to tide over his difficulties. Ahsanullah Khan, the court physician and Minister of Bahadur Shah, was a great patron of letters and also a close friend of Ghalib. Both he and Nasir-ud-Din joined in counsel and decided to intercede with Bahadur Shah on his behalf. Consequently, the King early in July 1850 commanded Ghalib to write the history of the royal house of Timur in Persian for which a sum of Rs. 600 per annum was sanctioned to be paid to him. He also received a robe of honour and the title of Najm-ud-Dawlah, Dabir-ul-Mulk, Nizam Jang. Thus Ghalib became an employee of the Mughal court with a specific assignment and a fixed

salary. At the same time Ahsanullah Khan was directed to collect and supply the basic historical material to Ghalib who in his turn was to render it into Persian. This work continued till 1857 when the greart political upheaval commonly known as the 'Mutiny' took place. Ghalib had intended to complete the history in two parts; the first from Timur to Humayun and the second from Akbar to Bahadur Shah II. Ahsanullah Khan who was charged with culling and collecting the material from different sources for being translated into Persian could not do so regularly--he had several other preoccupations as well. Thus, the work on the first volume dragged on for several years and was completed somehow. Apparently, material for the second volume did not come in at all. Seeing that no one was interested in the progress of the work, Ghalib also became lukewarm and did not ask Ahsanullah Khan to supply him with the material. The second volume was consequently never compiled. The first part of the history was published under the title of Mihr-i.Nimruz in 1854 from the Royal Press in the Red Fort.

After this, a brief spell of comfort and properity set in. The king's literary consultant Mohammad Ibrahim Zauq died in November 1854. The king now began consulting Ghalib in the same capacity. So did Mirza Fakhr-ud-Din, the heir-apparent of Bahadur Shah II. Mirza Fakhr-ud-Din began paying the poet a sum of Rs. 400 as annual stipend for his services. Apparently King Wajid Ali Shah, the last ruler of Oudh, also patronised the poet with an annuity. Quite obviously, these grants must have helped Ghalib to live in comparative ease and comfort.

Mutiny

Unfortunately, it did not take long for the situation to

take a turn for the worse. In May 1857, occurred the event which has been variously called the great *Sipahi* (Sepoy) Mutiny by the British and the First War of Independence by Indians. With this the house of Timur was completely swept off the Indian scene and the country passed under the dominance of a foreign power. Ghalib also could not escape the consequences of this change-over.

The 'Mutiny' was the climax of the political suppression and high-handedness practised by the British ever since they had taken to governing in place of their original avocation of trading in this country. Along with some other European powers, they had come to India in the early part of the 17th century as merchants; for this purpose the East India Company was constituted in England under a Royal Charter. They pursued their profession quite diligently as long as the central Mughal Government first at Agra and later at Delhi remained strong and effective. After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, slowly the hold of the Delhi Government on its distant dominions loosened and a period of unrest and internecine warfare set in. In these troubled conditions, the two mercantile companies of England and France saw their opportunity and with a view to increasing their influence in this country began taking a more active part in its internal politics. They started keeping armed levies in their pay and fortified their factory towns. With the object of having their own proteges as rulers of different States, they started taking sides in local quarrel. In due course, this turned out to be a race between England and France to gain a position of vantage in his country.

A long period of peace and prosperity had brought in its wake deterioration both in administration and in the social order. Naturally this was a very fertile ground for any ambitious seeker of fortune when states crumbled like

houses of cards and new ones sprouted up in their place overnight. For a number of years the British and the French had vied with each other to enlarge their respective sphere of influence. In this race the British proved luckier and come to occupy a dominating position over large areas. The French gradually lost ground and had to leave the field uncontested to their rivals. The British who were new masters of vast territories of the country either in their own right or through their hirelings worked perseveringly to gain complete hold over the country. Consequently, the Indian rulers and princes who had been dispossessed by them felt aggrieved and nursed a sense of grudge against their new masters. The smouldering fire was kept in check as long as there was no organised opposition. The ferment was waiting for an opportune moment to boil ever. This was provided by an accidental decision of the British military authorities to issue a new type of cartridge to the forces. Before firing, the end of this cartridge had to be bitten off with teeth. Rumour went round that this was yet another device to corrupt the religion of both Hindus and Muslims as the cartridges contained grease in which lard and cow-fat had been mixed.

Ever since the British had come to India, their policy of proselytizing the native population to Christianity was well-know. In fact, that was one of the grounds on which the East India Company's Charter had been renewed in 1833. The British administration had started schools and colleges in different parts of the country where christian teaching formed a part of the regular curriculum. In Delhi itself, some students of the old Delhi College amongst whom Master Ram Chandra's and Dr. Chaman Lal's names are prominent had openly embraced Christianity. The general public which was already suspicious of the intentions and activities of the British missionaries was

convinced after this event that their Western rulers were out to corrupt their youth and wean them away from their ancestral faith. Into this atmosphere of suspicion was injected the poison of a new rumour about the cartridge. Naturally it was readily accepted and dissatisfaction amongst the forces spread like wildfire.

The first shot was fired at Meerut on 10 May 1857 at a military parade. The local infantry refused to obey their British Commander's orders and mutinied. They killed their officers and broke open the prison doors to free their comrades who had been jailed previously for disobedience. The same evening a number of them marched to Delhi where they reached the following morning, 11 May 1857. They requested Bahadur Shah to take the command of the Indian troops in his own hands and declare himself the Emperor of India. Bahadur Shah who was 82 at the time was reluctant to accede to their request. But the force of circumstances was too strong for him to resist. In the meantime, rebellion had spread to other cities as well. The ring leaders gradually converged on the capital and established a provisional Government, the puppethead of which was Bahadur Shah. All British officers and civilians in Delhi were either killed or had to flee the town and take shelter wherever they could. The city remained in the hands of the Indian forces for more than five months. The British authorities kept their heads. Through sheer perseverance and good luck, they were able to quell the rising in different parts of the country and ultimately won the battle of Delhi as well. They re-occupied the city on 19 September, 1857.

This was succeeded by a long period of retaliatory repression. Thousands of citizens were summarily tried and hanged, their property and worldly belongings confiscated or they were asked to pay heavy fines to escape the extreme

penalty. Large numbers left the city and fled to other towns where they lived for long periods in a state of poverty and privation till conditions settled down to permit them to return to their homes.

During the rising Ghalib had stayed on in Delhi and did not leave the city. The truth is he had nowhere to go to. It was a period of great hardship for him. For a long time now he had been living mainly on his two sources of income : first, the pension of Rs. 750 per annum which he received from the British treasury; and second, Rs. 600 per annum which he received from Bahadur Shah for writing the official history of the royal family. As soon as the mutineers entered Delhi and the British power collapsed, both these sources dried up—the family pension granted by the British could not be paid because the British rule had ceased to exist and Bahadur Shah could not pay as he was no longer his own master and in any case had no funds to meet his commitments.

The rising was basically misconceived and ill-planned or rather utterly unplanned and therefore was foredoomed to failure. There was no concerted scheme or programme before the leaders of the rising. Different cities had their own leaders amongst whom there was no co-ordination or consultation. On the other hand, the British had the benefit of a unified command and a clear-cut objective before them. Even the Indian population itself was not united in its opposition to the British. For example, the Panjab wholeheartedly supported the British and it was the army supplied by various Sikh States which acted as the spearhead of the British offensive first in Delhi and then at Lucknow. The Nepal Raj also ran to the assistance of the British. The Indian forces were mostly untrained and disorganised. One stronghold after another was reduced and the British regained their supremacy even in a greater

degree than before by the end of the year.

With the restoration of peace and reoccupation of Delhi by the British, Ghalib had hoped that conditions would become normal and the payment of his family pension would be resumed. Subsequent events however belied this fond expectation.

Ghalib was a very far-sighted and worldly-wise man. When trouble started in Delhi, nobody could foresee which way the wind would blow. He, therefore, kept himself *mostly* aloof from the activities of anti-British forces. Still he could not entirely cut himself off from the Red Fort, the centre of these activities or the court of Bahadur Shah. Mohammad Ibrahim Zauq, the King's consultant in poetry, had died in November 1854. Thereafter Ghalib had been appointed in his place as literary adviser to the King. In addition to his being the official historian of the court, this new assignment required his attendance upon the king more or less regularly. On the other hand, there was no British officer left in the city with whom he could maintain his usual friendly or social contacts. He thought it politic therefore to keep his relations with Bahadur Shah's court and not show his hand openly. In spite of these precautions, fortune did not favour him.

'Sikka' Charge

During the occupation of the city by the Indian forces, the British had maintained an efficient net-work of espionage in Delhi and the Red Fort itself. These spies collected all sorts of news—authentic and otherwise—and regularly transmitted them to the British Commander who had encamped on the ridge outside Kashmere Gate. One such informer one day reported that at a levee held by Bahadur Shah, Ghalib was also present and had presented to the

King a *sikka* composed by himself for inscription of the new coin. This was not true. The *sikka* imputed to Ghalib had been composed by another minor poet and what is more this fact had actually been published in a journal prior to the date on which it was alleged to have been presented by Ghalib to the King. The spy's report remained on record all the same. After the reoccupation of the city by the British when Ghalib called on the Chief Commissioner of Delhi, he was confronted with this report. As during the rising he had taken no active part against the British, his life and property were spared and the *sikka* was taken as a poet's weakness. In those days when on mere suspicion people lost their lives or were sentenced to prison this was no small mercy. The result of this allegation was, however that his family pension was stopped and he was no longer invited to the levees (*darbars*) of either the Governor-General or the Lt. Governor. Ghalib had been expecting that with the restoration of peace, *status quo ante* would prevail. He was greatly disappointed therefore at this unexpected turn of events. Not only had the conditions not improved, but they had actually worsened. If some of his friends and admirers had not assisted him his difficulties would have gone beyond his power of endurance. Fortunately Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan of Rampur came to his rescue.

Rampur Relations

Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan, who had succeded his father Mohammad Sa'id Khan as ruler of Rampur in 1855, was a promising young man of great literary accomplishments. At an early age, he was sent by his father to Delhi to complete his education. In those days, among other teachers, Ghalib had taught him some Persian. After his

return to Rampur, apparently this contact was not kept up. When he ascended the throne in 1855, Ghalib made an attempt to pick up the threads by sending him a poem. This too failed to elicit a response. Thereafter, Ghalib kept his own counsel. In the beginning of 1857 before the rising, Maulvi Fazl Haq, an intimate friend of Ghalib's, was in Rampur and he held a position of great influence with the young ruler. Fazl Haq suggested to Ghalib to write and send a *qasida* to the Nawab. He hoped this would restore the disrupted ties between Ghalib and the Nawab and might also result in the conferment of a permanent pension or at least a lump-sum grant to the poet.

This time fortune smiled on Ghalib. Not only was the *qasida* received with warm approval, but Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan also decided to become Ghalib's pupil (*shagird*) in poetry. Hardly had a couple of months passed after this new relationship between the two, when the political storm of 1857 broke out. During the period of unrest, too, Ghalib maintained regular correspondence with the Nawab. Before this he had occasionally received financial assistance from him as well. though no regular salary had been fixed. When after the return of the British to Delhi his efforts to resume old friendly ties with them failed and his family pension was not restored, he requested the Nawab to fix for him a permanent stipend whereby he could be relieved of financial worries. Thereupon, Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan ordered that henceforth he should receive a sum of Rs. 100 a month from the Rampur treasury.

Dastanbu

Apparently in the idle days of his stay at home during the upheaval, he kept jotting down notes of what was

happening around him in the city. It was not a regular diary of the day-to-day happenings but just notes of the salient points which could be used if necessary for compiling a full-length chronicle of the eventful period. When Delhi was reconquered by the British, he put these notes into shape and prepared a slim volume in Persian called *Dastanbu.* He claims that except for proper nouns, he has not used any Arabic word in his narrative. The claim is not entirely correct. In spite of his best efforts, a few Arabic words have crept into the composition. His deliberate attempt, however, to avoid Arabic vocabulary which was in daily use compelled him to find classical Persian equivalents which in most cases had become obsolete. This has made the book rather heavy to read and difficult to understand.

Even as a reference book for the events of the period, it is not entirely reliable. We have seen that during the revolt, Ghalib had kept up his relations with Bahadur Shah and he had perforce to hobnob occasionally with some anti-British elements as well. Although he had taken no positive step against the British which could openly compromise him, yet his conscience was not quite at ease as he knew this inactive attiude of his would not be considered enough. On the other hand, his friendship with the King could naturally be twisted to dub him anti-British. When, therefore, he compiled the full-length *Dastanbu* from his notes, he saw to it that the events narrated by him neither minimised the errors of the Indian forces nor magnified the atrocities of the British army. As from the very beginning he had contemplated sending complimentary copies of the book to some of his friends and patrons among the English officers *to make it acceptable,* he glossed over some events and high-lighted others. For obvious reasons, such a book cannot be a reliable source

of history.

He had intended to use book both as an instrument of fresh introduction to the British authorities and as an evidence of his friendship for them in adversity. When the book was published, he despatched presentation copies to various British dignitaries in India as well as in England These, however, failed to impress and did not have the desired effect. One great drawback was the language of the book which was not easily intelligible, His personal efforts, therefore, to effect a reconciliation with the authorities did not prove of much avail. In the meantime, many friends were trying to get him a pardon from the authorities. But it is doubtful whether they would have been ever convinced of his innocence had not the Nawab of Rampur-interceded on his behalf. Ultimately in May 1860, the authorities rescinded their previous order and thereby his family pension was restored. Three years later in March 1863, his participation in official levees was also resumed. Thus conditions became normal and *status quo ante* was re-established.

Qati' Burhan

Ghalib was essentially a poet and a writer. In spite of financial difficulties and worldly worries, he could not, for a long time, keep himself away from literary activities. During the period of turmoil, except for occassional visits to the Red Fort, he mostly kept his own company and did not stir out. He had all along been a varacious reader and possessed a very retentive memory. In these days also books were his best companions. Among these was a copy of the Persian lexicon, *Burhan-i-Qati*, which, in his leisure hours, he began to browse through. This is the famous dictionary compiled by Mohammad Husain Tabrizi

a new edition of which had been published in Calcutta. While glancing through the book Ghalib discovered numerous discrepancies in it. He began jotting down his critical remarks in the margin of his copy. Gradually these notes became so numerous that after the restoration of normalcy, he got them copied out for the benefit of his pupils and friends. In the beginning he had no intention of publishing them. Later on, however, some of his friends advised him that their publication would be useful to the general reader and also add to his own reputation as a Persian scholar. He had all along criticised the Persian writers of India and called them an untrustworthy authority so far as the Persian language was concerned. The compiler of *Burhan-i-Qati*, was also born and brought up in India although his fore-fathers were of Iranian origin. Ghalib was therefore persuaded to publish his criticim of the dictionary in the hope that this would prove his old thesis of unreliability of Indian writers. The book was first published in 1862 under the title, *Qati' Burhan*. This proved to be nothing less than a hornet's nest. Human nature is extremely chary of any change. Most of us continue following in the footsteps of our fore-fathers merely because we are afraid of making a change or trying a new experiment. What is worse, very often we are convinced of the unreasonableness or futility of a certain position and still we continue clinging to it because we have inherited it from our predecessors and dare not stand up against public opinion to alter or reform it. This is true in all walks of life, including education and scholarship. *Burhan-i-Qati'* had for long been an accepted authority in the Persian language. All scholars had put their seal on its authenticity and trustworthiness. To speak against it was, therefore, presumptuous, even sacrilegious, and Ghalib was guilty of this crime. No sooner was the book

published than a veritable storm broke out. One after another, books and pamphlets were published trying to refute his stand. Ghalib and his friends did not take things lying down either. They tried to meet this onslaught to the best of their ability. With the gapping of time, the fury of the opposition abated but did not completely die out. In fact, he was forced to have recourse to a court of law in order to claiming damages from a libellous writer Aminud-Din by name. He did not, however, succeed in his claim. Some known scholars of the day, with a view to saving the skin of the writer in question, prevaricated and tried to explain away the derogatory expressions to reduce the acuteness of their sting. Ghalib had therefore to settle the case out of court and withdraw his claim.

Court Poet

After his pension was restored in 1860 and his participation in official levees was resumed in 1863, he began to aspire anew for additional honours. He made a representation that he be appointed Poet Laureate of the Queen of England and also his book *Dastanbu* be published under official patronage. As was to be expected, both these requests were turned down. It appears contemporary jealousies played a decisive part in the authorities coming to this decision. The reply of the Home Authorities in England was quite encouraging, even favourable. They said Ghalib could not be appointed Poet Laureate of the Queen but there would be no objection if the Governor-General decided to have him as his court poet. There-upon, the Governor-General-in-Council asked for a report on his behaviour during the revolt. In the course of investigations, the informer's despatch regarding his *sikka* for Bahadur Shah once again came to the surface.

The upshot was that he was taken as a sympathiser of the mutineers, if not actually anti-British. This blasted any chances he might have had of his being appointed a court poet by the Governor-General. In spite of this, the case was referred to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab, asking him to take suitable action at his level on the two requests made by Ghalib and to report on them.

Literary Popularity

Though materially his position did not improve and he had to struggle continuously to make the two ends meet, he had greatly added to his stature in the literary world. Before the 1857 political upheaval, collections of his poems in Urdu and Persian had been published. The Urdu *Diwan* was pulblished twice in 1841 and 1847 and the Persian *Diwan* once in 1845. The public was now desirous of seeing his books published anew as old editions must have been exhausted and were no more available. The Urdu *Diwan* particularly was in great demand. Apparently, he had no copy of it in his possession. Somehow he got hold of one and prepared it for the press. This was published in 1861. This edition however was not well-produced—no care had been taken as regards the get-up or calligraphy, and on top of that, there were a large number of printer's devils in it too. He therefore corrected a copy of it himself and sent it to the well-known Nizami Press of Kanpur wherefrom it was published the following year, *viz.*, 1862. The same year (1862) Munshi Nawal Kishore, the famous Lucknow publisher, paid a visit to Delhi and requested Ghalib to permit him to bring out a new edition of his Persian *Diwan*. Ghalib had never collected his writings himself. These were kept in safe custody by two of his close friends, *i.e.*, Nawab Zia-ud-Din Ahmad Khan and Nazir

Husain Mirza, who took charge of his Persian and Urdu writings, respectively. He accepted Nawal Kishor's offer and recommended him to Nawab Zia-ud-Din Ahmad Khan. Munshi Nawal Kishore took the manuscript with him to Lucknow but for various reasons printing could not be completed expeditiously. The book came out of the press after about a year in the middle of 1863.

These several editions of his Urdu and Persian poetry are an index of his mounting popularity with the reading public. In the short span of three years, the publication of four editions of his writings is a clear indication of the keen appreciation of the people who now avidly waited for his compositions.

Visit to Rampur

Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan of Rampur, who had become his pupil in the beginning of 1857, seeing that his financial condition was precarious, had invited him to come to Rampur. At the time Ghalib had high hopes of normal conditions returning soon and his being taken back into official favour. He, therefore, replied to the Nawab that as soon as his relations with the British authorities were normalised, he would gladly pay him a visit. His expectations were belied and the authorities turned a deaf ear to all his entreaties. In the meantime, every avenue of income, except that of Rampur, had been cut off, Consequently, he thought he had better accept Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan's standing invitation. Life in Delhi was not safe either. Many people who had maintained their connections with the court of Bahadur Shah II or had entered into his service were arrested and prosecuted and many others who escaped were harassed and continued to remain in constant danger. Ghalib himself, on account of the charge that he

had written a *sikka* for Bahadur Shah, was suspect. He might have argued, therefore, that it would be advisable to keep away from Delhi for a while. In arriving at the decision to go to Rampur, he might have been influenced not only by the fact that he was receiving a regular monthly stipend from the Nawab but also that he could probably come to a satisfactory arrangement with the British through the good offices of the Nawab. During the rising the Nawab had remained a stadfast and staunch supporter of the British. He had helped them with cash and armed contingents. The British authorities were, therefore, greatly obliged to him and in recognition of his services had bestowed upon him certain disricts of the U.P. contignous to the existing state of Rampur. Ghalib knew all these developments and being in such difficult circumstances, he could not fail to perceive that perhaps the only remedy left to him was to use the Nawab's good offices. He accordingly left for Rampur in January 1860.

Ghalib had no living child of his own. At various times he had seven children but every one of them died in infancy, none getting beyond the age of 18 months. He first adopted his wife's cousin Zain-ul 'Abidin Khan who was no mean poet either writing under the *nom-de-plume* of Arif. The young man died of tuberculosis in 1852, leaving behind two infant sons. Ghalib's wife took charge of the elder boy Baqir Ali Khan and brought him home with her. The younger one, Husain Ali Khan, who was barely two years of age at the time remained with his grandmother, that is, with Ghalib's sister-in-law. Unfortunately, she also died soon after and now the younger boy also came to live with Ghalib. Both these children were brought up by Ghalib's wife and were treated as if they were their own grandsons. When Ghalib went to Rampur both of them accompanied him. He stayed in Rampur for more

than two months. He had intended to prolong his stay there particularly when there was practically nothing to bring him back to Delhi and life in Rampur was quite comfortable. In spite of that he had to return because the children got tired of the new surroundings and became home-sick.

Honours Restored

It was during Ghalib's stay in Rampur that the Nawab interceded on his behalf with the British authorities as a result of which his pension, as mentioned above, was restored to him in May 1860.

One wonders why was he so anxious after all for the restoration of this paltry pension of Rs. 750 per annum. The answer is that this was his only sure and permanent income. Any other accretion would be a windfall and the result of a lucky chance. One cannot live on the mere hope of a fortune coming one's way some day. One needs some mainstay to enable him to make his plan and programme of life. In Ghalib's case, this pension had, for a long time, constituted the only sure means of subsistence—what is more, a source of pride and prestige to him among his friends. It can be surmised that its stoppage must have been the subject of a gleeful talk among those who were against him. This pension had all along given him more or less free access to British official circles, His seat in the official levees was tenth on the right hand of the presiding officials be he the Governor-General or a Lt. Governor of the province. Compared to the meagre amount of his pension this was a very high honour, which must have been a cause of envy to his contemporaries. It is understandable, therefore why he was so anxious about these honours, that is to say his pension and his participation in levees.

Indian troops from Meerut had entered Delhi on 11 May 1857. He had before that received his pension for April 1857. Now in May 1860, he was paid three years arrears from May 1857 to April 1860 at the rate of Rs. 750 per annum, that is Rs. 2,250 less Rs. 100 which had been advanced to him on account in March 1859. Of this sum (Rs. 2,150) he paid Rs. 150 as tips to various lower rank employees of the court on the spot. Out of the remaining Rs. 2,000 he owed a sum of Rs. 1,500 to his caretaker who had looked after him all these years. And there was yet another outstanding debt of Rs. 1,100 which had to be paid to other suppliers. Obviously, the pension arrears which he had received were inadequate to meet all his liabilities. The resumption, of the pension, however, gave new hope and encouragement to him that all was not lost and there was still hope of his restoring cordial relations with the British authorities which he had given up before in despair. It was after this that he made rénewed offort for his robe of honour and participation in levees. As has been said earlier, the honour of participation in levees had been conferred upon him in 1823 during the time of William Bentinck when he had gone to Calcutta to prefer his case for pension before the Supreme Government. The robe of honour was bestowed upon him much latér. This consisted of seven full lengths of cloth of different types, a headband of precious stones and a necklace of pearls. When he attended levees, he was not required to make any cash presentation (*nazr*) to the presiding official. Instead he used to recite a eulogistic poem (*qasida*) in his praise.

When the old conditions were restored, he still found himself as impecunious as before. There was however no escape from it. In the meantime his principal patron Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan had died of cancer in April 1865.

KALB ALI KHAN

Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan was succeeded by his eldest son Nawab Kalb Ali Khan. Ghalib had to go to offer his condolences to the new Nawab and the bereaved family. But perhaps an even more important reason for this second visit to Rampur was that he was worried about the continuance of the stipend of Rs. 100 which had been paid to him by the late Nawab regularly since July 1859. Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan was a pupil of his and used to consult him about his Urdu poetry. This monthly grant might therefore be considered as a sort of compensation or salary for these services. However, no such relationship existed between Ghalib and the new Nawab. The latter was no pupil of his and quite justifiably might have stopped this payment. This would have resulted in great hardship to the poet. It was therefore essential for him to meet the Nawab and make sure that this dire step was not taken. Accordingly, Ghalib went to Rampur on the occasion of the coronation of the new Nawab who assured him that the stipend would continue uninterrupted. He must have heaved a sigh of relief at this.

He was still in Rampur when he received a letter from the Punjab Government asking him to send a copy of his book *Dastambu* to the Chief Secretary. This was quite obviously with reference to his application that the Government of India should sponsor this chronicle of the uprising. Apparently in Rampur whatever copy of the book was made available to him was not worthy of being forwarded to the Government. As he expected that the publication of this book by the Government would bring great material and social advantages to him, he immediately arranged for a new edition and sent a corrected copy to some friends in Bareilly for printing. A copy of this second edition was

forwarded by him to the Punjab Government. The Government asked for an expert report on it. The expert who probably could not even understand the burden of the book or appreciate its style submitted an adverse report saying that its language was old Persian containing a large number of obsolete words no longer in use and therefor unintelligible.

In the final order, the Governor-General decided that Ghalib could not be appointed his court poet but the Lt. Governor of the Punjab was at liberty to consider the case sympathetically and bestow upon him a special robe of honour or even raise his rank in the seating arrangement when he participated in his *darbar*. It was also decided that it would serve no useful purpose to publish *Dastanbu* at Government expense. Another hope had thus been shattered.

This time Ghalib stayed in Rampur for about ten weeks. He left for Delhi at the end of December 1865. On the way home he met with a very serious accident. It was the rainy season and rivers were in spate. Before reaching Moradabad he had to cross the Ramganga over a bridge of boats. He was travelling in a *palki* and all the baggage and servants were on bullock-carts. He had hardly crossed the bridge a strong current swept away the bridge thus separating him from his companions. It was with some difficulty that he reached Moradabad, the next halting station. It was mid-winter. The nights were extremely cold. And what was worse, he had practically no bedding or clothes with him. This affected his health which was already in a bad state and he fell seriously ill. The following morning the news got round that Ghalib was staying at the *caravanserai*. A subjudge of the place who know him prevailed upon him to shift to his residence. He procured for him the requisite medical aid and looked

after him for five days. When he was in a more or less fit condition to travel, he continued his journey and reached Delhi in the first week of January 1866.

This unfortunate accident completely undermined his health. His visit to Rampur did not prove a financial success either. Even before undertaking this arduous journey he was in indifferent health and not in a fit condition to move out of Delhi. Circumstances, however, forced his hand and he decided to take the risk. He owed a large sum of money to different creditors and Rampur could be his only possible source of help, Nawab Kalb Ali Khan was himself a learned man and a great patron of scholars and poets. Ghalib had been the court poet of Rampur all these years and was very closely associated with the late Nawab, the father of Kalb Ali Khan. Moreover on the occasion of accession, oriental traditions required the ruler to distribute large sums of money amongst people attached to the *darbar* and the royal family. This must have instilled the hope in his mind that he might receive a sufficiently big sum from Nawab Kalb Ali Khan which would largely if not completely, relieve him of all his worries. On the other hand, with all his generosity and patronage of arts and letters, the Nawab was a very careful man so far as spending of money was concerned. He had a large band of writers and poets around him but every one of them was required to perform some duty or the other in the administrative set-up of the State to deserve and receive a salary; one did not get it merely because he was a poet or a writer. It is not surprising then that Ghalib was disappointed. No big donation came his way nor was he accorded any special treatment. A paltry sum of Rs. 1000 was all that was sanctioned for him in connection with the coronation and

another Rs. 200 as travelling expenses just before his departure.

To add fuel to fire, an occasion of friction between the two arose after his return to Delhi. The young Nawab sent a piece of Persian prose to Ghalib requesting him to see if it was fit for publication as an introduction to a book. In the script the Nawab had used certain phrases which, though in vogue in India at the time, could not be considered valid according to the usage followed by classical Persian writers. Ghalib changed them accordingly. When the Nawab received the corrected copy of the introduction and saw the changes made by Ghalib, he asked him some questions by way of clarification and at the same time cited certain Indian scholars of Persian in support of his point of view. Ghalib, who throughout his life had paid scant courtsey to Indian writers, expressed himself in rather brusque terms and dismissed them. The Nawab, on the other hand, was a traditionalist. He took exception to his tone and language. An unpleasant controversy followed. Ghalib got panicky. He was afraid that this might lead to the cessation of his monthly stipend. Consequently he made a rather object surrender to the Nawab. Kalb Ali Khan, on his part terminated the controversy abruptly but did not go to the extreme length. This unfortunate episode ended all hopes of any further literary consultation and collaboration between the two. Certain other events also contributed to the deepening of the misunderstanding. After this any extra grants also completely stopped and hence- forward the relations between the two remained merely formal but not cordial.

The End

The poet was now fast approaching his natural end.

His health had been in not too satisfactory a condition for a long time. The accident he met with during his return journey from Rampur quickened the pace. And apart from this, due to financial stringency, he was no longer in a position to keep up his earlier standard of life. In his early days and his youth, he had lived a life of comfort and even extravagance, With advancing years, his income became limited to what he got from the British treasury and the Nawab of Rampur. In the meantime his liabilities had increased manifold, particularly since the arrival of Zain-ul-'Abidin Khan's two sons. Different maladies now affected him. His chronic constipation resulted in various complications. In 1862 and 1863 he was attacked by boils and ulcers all over the body which enfeebled him extremely. He had hardly recovered from these when he began suffering from hernia and probably there was a touch of diabetes, too. His diet became very meagre. He stayed indoors most of the time. In such circumstances even his routine correspondence could not be attended to, let alone any literary activity which he had carried on all his life. He, therefore, published an anouncement in two of the leading weeklies of Delhi in which he regretted his inability to attend to literary pursuits and requested his friends and pupils not to send their compositions to him for correction. Nobody paid any heed to his request though. His friends continued sending him letters which he had to attend to.

The end was now near. Weakness increased steadily. He started having occasional fainting fits. He could not take solid food any more. This was the condition when on 14 February 1869, he had a stoke of cerebral haemorrhage after which he fainted. The best medical aid then available could not revive him and the following day on 15 February 1869, soon after midday, he breathed his last

The same evening the dead body was taken to the small village of Nizam-ud-Din and laid to rest in the family burial ground of the Loharu family. With him passed away the last classical poet of Persian in India and one who had set Urdu poetry on a new path which has taken it to the heights attained by subsequent writers.

II

GHALIB'S ART

Ghalib began writing when he was very young—11 or 12 years old only. In the beginning he used Asad as his *nom de plume* which was the obvious choice for one whose name was Asadullah Khan. He, however, came to know later on that there was another poet writing under the same *Takhallus* (pen-name). To avoid confusion he changed his own to Ghalib which again was quite natural for him to adopt, for, one of the epithets of Ali, the son-in-law of the prophet of Islam, was Asad Allah el-Ghalib, Although there is evidence to support the fact that at this stage he did write in Persian as well, there is no doubt that he devoted most of his time to Urdu.

By 1816 he had written enough to enable him to compile a *Diwan* in Urdu. In the early stages he was greatly under the influence of certain Persian poets who were well-known for their unrealistic themes and laboured style. Ghalib's compositions of this period also suffer from these shortcomings. Not that no one tried to check him from treading this fruitless path but, headstrong and self-opinionated that he was, he did not need any adverse criticism. Years later when he had already settled down in Delhi, some of his close friends insisted upon his changing his style as well as making a selection from the Urdu *Diwan* which could find favour with the general reader. He could not ignore this sincere and friendly advice and had to discard a large portion of his original *Diwan* to make it more readable and intelligible.

The *Diwan* was first published in 1841. Its publication

truly proved to be a turning-point in the history of Urdu literature. It is surprising what far-reaching influence this slim volume of less than 1,100 couplets has had on the Urdu language in general and Urdu poetry in particular. Ghalib lived for another 28 years after this but even at the end of this long period the *Diwan* did not exceed 1,800 couplets.

Urdu is a direct off shoot of several Indian languages, particularly of *Khari* and *Haryani*. Consequently, the bulk of its vocabulary was derived from Indian sources. It borrowed its script from the Persian which was introduced in this country with the coming of the Muslims. Early writers in Urdu were invariably well-versed in Persian and were mostly religious-minded. When they began writing in Urdu they naturally followed in the footsteps of the classical Persian writers. In Persian poetry the three most important forms are *ghazal*, the *qasida* and the *mathnavi*.

All of these and particularly the ghazal are imbued with the themes of love, wine and mysticism. Thus a more or less firm convention of form and content had already been established even before Urdu poetry came into being. Urdu poets could not escape the influence of either of these categories of poetry or their themes and they started imitating them. It was, therefore, necessarily all artificial and imaginary. The poet had little experience of his own in this regard, In spite of that he wrote like a knowledgeable person. What is worse, very little attention was paid to innumerable other problems of life. Love, wine and mysticism may be very important topics for discussion in their own way. Nevertheless, they cannot and do not constitute the whole of life. The result was that all our poets lived an imaginary life of their own creation and seldom had their feet on the terra-firma.

Ghalib was the first poet to rebel against this situation.

He too had started writing like his predecessors on imaginary and unrealistic themes. After a while he realised the shallowness of this kind of poetry and introduced a new vein in it to make it more plausible. He wrote about life and its multifarious problems—man and his belief and iner thoughts, love and psychological reflexes and reactions and several other topics which are the daily experience of every one of us. Poetry in his hand thus became the interpretation of our daily experience. It naturally imparted to the reader a greater pleasure and a keener sense of enjoyment. Quite naturally he could not cut himself off completely from a two-hundred-year-old tradition set by his predecessors. We do find in his *Diwan* expamples of unrealistic poetry which he had inherited from the poets of old. His greatness lies in the fact that he realised the futility of this imaginary and illusory kind of writing and had the courage to stand up against it and strike out a new path. During the past century, Urdu poetry has attained great heights and achieved laudable success. No doubt this result was brought about to a considerable extent by our contact with the outside world and knowledge of Western languages and their literature. But we cannot forget that it was Ghalib who had first cut the old moorings and showed us a new path to uncharted realms of thought and knowledge.

We have here a few examples of the poetry and thought of Ghalib on different subjects, from his Urdu Diwan.

GOD

You are ignorant of the secrets of the Great Unknown.
If you were not, you would realize that every cover reproduces His melodies.

His half-covered face has further enhanced His beauty beyond description;
The veil has added to the charms far more than the locks of hair did.

Who could sight Him? He is one and matchless.
Had there been even a semblance of duality, we would have encountered Him somewhere.

When there was nothing, God was; and if there were nothing, still God would be.
My being has been my undoing; if 'I' were not, what would there have been?

The rising sun spells the death of dew-drops;
I also exist only till you cast a loving glance at me.

My deity is beyond the bounds of comprehension,
For those who know, the *Qibla* is only a pointer to the real Qibla.

He is not finished with His make-up as yet,
Behind the veil He ever has a looking-glass before Him.

At every camping station quite a few, tired of the long trek, dropped out.
After all if they could not reach You, what else could they have done?

For this mad dance of every atom He alone has to apologise—
He who has filled the universe from end to end with His all-pervading glory to make things non-existing.

Whatever divine knowledge you may think of emanates from the self—
Be it by delving into its depths or even by ignoring it altogether.

To talk of the manifold manifestations of one God is like blindly following one's imagination; and
Truly these gods of our imagination have made us nonbelievers.

Despite your presence in every object,
Nothing can be seen like you anywhere.

RELIGION

Purity cannot become pronounced without the presence of impurity;
A garden in fact serves as a base to make the mirror of springtime more effective.

We are Unitarians, to discard rituals is our duty.
When different faiths disappear, they then constitute the basic Religion.

In order that our prayers be not tainted with the motive of wine and honey,
Will someone please pick up Paradise and push it into Hell?

How could one ignore the loss of opportunity of life bestowed upon one to achieve something great.
Even though one may have spent one's precious time in plentiful prayers?

Devotion with steadfastness is the essence of faith;

The Brahmin thus deserves to be bruied in Ka'aba though he might have died in his idol-house.

People persist in praises of Paradise, perhaps truly;
I wish to God that it may be honoured by your presence!

In lieu of a precious life one loses here, one is offered Paradise after death.
Poor reward! The joy of intoxication is not worth the suffering of the hangover.

I know full well the truth about Paradise;
Whatever it is, it is a pleasant chimera to think about.

O God! if I'm to be punished for sins I have committed,
I should also get credit for the disappointments suffered for sins conceived but not committed.

Why must it be essential that everyone should get the same disappointing reply?
Let us as well visit the Sinal mountain and try our luck!

How could I give credit for Piety? For even if it were not for show,
There is plenty of unconcealed greed to receive a reward for good actions.

MYSTICISM

Even if one were to mention love's coquetry and amorous glances,
In speech one could not describe them without using the simile of a dagger and knife.

Similarly the talk may actually be about the presence of God,
But one cannot help mentioning the wine and the cup.

The act of seeing, the seer and the object seen are basically the same.
I'm therefore bewildered in what category the act of seeing is to be placed.

The very existence of an ocean depends on its taking on different forms,
Otherwise of what importance are a drop, a wave and the bubble?

What is considered as seen is nothing but the absolute secret,
Like one wakes up in a dream, though one is dreaming still.

Don't be deceived by the appearance of things.
Even if they aver 'It is', 'It is not'.

To me this world is like a child's play;
Day and night a show goes on in my presence.
To my mind Solomon's throne is but a toy,
And Messiah's miracles a way of speech only

Creation of the universe is nothing but in name only.
And the existence of things a fib of our imagination.

Faith tries to keep me to itself, while non-belief pulls me the other way.
Thus Ka'aba is behind me and the Church in front.

LIFE

Asad! beware of the world, even Farhad who for his love
 cut through rocks,
Couldn't break the shackles of conventions and had to fall
 back upon the traditional hatchet to end his life.

Has ever one come across faithfulness in this life?
No, this has remained merely a word that has not been
 translated into action.

My friends have turned into preceptors, O what a friend-
ship!
I wish someone had sympathised with me and helped me
 achieve my objective!

Do not underestimate the sufferings of this life.
Were it a spark, it would have bled a stone to death.

No doubt sufferings shorten life but so long as one possse-
 sses a heart there is no escape;
If there were not the sufferings of love, there would have
 been those of how to pass this life!

This spring in nothing but a sort of *henna* to ornament the
 feet of autumn;
Every passing pleasure of this life leaves behind a scar of
 permanent pain.

O Ghalib! I'll appreciate it if someone were to help me in
 my distress now.
When there were no knots to undo, my own fingers were
 strong enough to do so.

When I'm senseless to pain, why worry if my head is cut off ?
Where is not severed from body, it would have been bent on my knees.

The highest pleasure for a drop is to get merged in the river;
When pain crosses the bounds of endurance, it becomes its own relief.

I'm ashamed that love has devastated everything that I possessed,
Nothing is left with me except an unfulfilled desire to rehabilitate myself.

Life and suffering are in fact two synonyms:
How can one get rid of pain so long as one is alive?

If jealousy has made your heart sore go about the world:
Maybe a large number of scenes and contacts will open out and broaden your narrow vision!

Ghalib! I'm afraid my efforts will never bear any fruit;
If the locust did not destroy the crop, lightning would one day reduce the harvest to ashes.

How could I have slept so carefree at night if I had not been robbed in the day-time?
Blessed is the thief therefore for relieving me of the worry of guarding my property.

Once turned out of the tavern, it matters little where I take up my abode;
Let it be a mosque or a school or even a monastery.

My sympathiser has brought disgrace on me; such concern be damned!
Why should anyone offer to be my confidant, if he could not endure pain?

Don't hesitate to narrate to me in the cage, my friend, the tale of tragedy that befell the Garden;
It could not have been my nest which was struck by lightning yesterday!

Let me go and take up my abode in a place where there is none else;
None to talk to and none to argue with;
All I need is to construct a house that has neither doors nor walls even,
There shall be no neighbour, nor a door-keeper to keep watch.
And if I fall ill there'll be none to attend upon me;
And if I die, none to mourn my loss.

Every breath one takes generaters heat that ultimately consumes the body, they say.
I'm so distressed at the inadequacy of the fire inside me that annihilates not and thus my agony is prolonged.

What autumn! and why talk of spring! whatever the season,
My condition remains unaltered, I'm confined to the same cage and bemoan my helplessness to scan the skies.

I wish I could ask this earth : O miserly one!
What have you done with all those precious treasures that were buried in you?

If someone talks rot, don't listen to him.
And if someone does a wrong, say not so.

If someone takes a wrong path, stop him.
And if someone commits a mistake, forgive him.

Is there one in this world who has no desire?
How can then the desires of all be met?

I have thousands of such desires that for the fulfilment of every one of them one could die.
A large number of them were fulfilled, still there remained numerous unrealized.

Neither is an arrow trained in the bow, nor a hunter sitting in ambush,
I'm quite at peace with myself in the corner of my cage here.

MAN

Flashes of God's glory should have fallen on man and not on Sinai;
Drink is distributed keeping in view the capacity of the drinkers.

A drop of water I'm though; but this drop in reality is the river itself;
Like the vain Mansoor, however, I do not proclaim that I'm the river.

Bestowing on me the two worlds, He thought I was satisfied,
Whereas I had kept quiet because I was too modest to haggle.

It is not that the candle has no sympathisers in the assembly,
But if the distress were burning her life out, what help could the sympathisers render in the circumstances!

Do not speak of all, but quite a few manifested themselves in flowers and roses,
What beauties there must have been which were laid down in graves.

We also once knew how to decorate picturesquely the assembly halls of friends,
But these have become now the embellishment of the shelf of forgetfulness.

How could one ignore the loss of opportunity of life bestowed upon one to achieve something great,
Even though one may have spent one's precious time in plentiful prayers?

The more I'm engrossed in problems mundane,
The more am I removed from understanding the truth about myself.

PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

The seeds of destruction are laid in the very foundation of life,
Look, the sweat of the tiller's brow is transformed into the lightning that one day burns down his harvest.

To be head over shoulders in love and also instictively try self-preservation—what folly!

It is like worshipping the lightning and then lamenting the inevitable destruction of all one possesses.

To think of beauty is akin to performing a beautiful deed (which I did in life).
That is why a door to paradise has been opened from inside my grave.

Take it that even a seemingly simple task is very difficult to accomplish,
So much so that it is not easy for a person to be human.

Ambition urges one to work tirelessly for an objective;
If there were no death, life wouldn't hold out any attraction.

Every drop of water can proclaim: "I'm the ocean".
True, when one completely surrenders to another, one's identity is merged in the other.

In a drop one should fathom a river and from a part guess about the whole.
If not so, the eye is not discerning enough and is but child's play!

I gave up life which any way. He had bestowed upon me;
Offering it is but poor return! I have failed to discharge the debt divine.

Achievement has always been commensurate with the daring one employs;
In the eye rests the drop (of water) which did not contend to become a pearl.

Man's mind is the playground of millions of thoughts,
To me solitude is a veritable crowd of noisy friends.

Day and night the seven stars are in motion,
Something or other is bound to happen, why worry then?

All my life I have looked forward to death.
I don't know what lies in store for me when death does actually come!

Under every ripple is spread a net of hundreds of alligator's hungry mouths.
None knows what a drop has to go through before it becomes a pearl.

The span of life is but the wink of an eye;
The carousing party revels till the dance of the candle flame lasts.

Asad! life's worries have no remedy except death;
The candle has to burn in all whethers till daybreak.

If she is faithful in her promise to me, others say: it is a cruel act;
It is common (practice) that good men are dubbed bad.

The steed of life is at a gallop; where it would halt one knows not;
Neither have we our grip on the bridle, nor are out feet in the stirrup.

To an understanding mind the storm of difficulties is but a school,

And each lash of a wave the kindly slap of a teacher.

When one gets used to sufferings, one suffers no more;
I encountered so many difficulties in life that they became easy to deal with.

To go under an obligation destroys whatever aspirations you may possess;
Do not, therefore, be indebted to the world, be it only to learn a lesson of contentedness.

In this world the tulip is born with a cancerous spot inside it that destroys it in the end.
Similarly, the hot sweat of the tiller changes into lightning that burns down his crop one day!

When a drop merges in the river it becomes the river itself;
"All's well that ends well".

Commotion in the house depends upon a gathering anyway,
Let it be a death dirge even, if a song of gaiety be not possible.

This world if full of riches shows few generous, daring souls are left behind.
Just like if the goblets and jugs remains full of wine, the tavern must have been bereft of visitors.

What pride of performance can the intelligentsia of the world claim?
When they are still blind slaves of their commonplace traditions!

O Ghalib! the path of final destruction is ever present in my mind;
For it alone binds together the loose leaves of the Book of Life.

LOVE

You tell me that you wouldn't return my heart to me if you recovered it;
Pretend no more, you have given me the clue. I had lost it long ago, now I know who has got it.

Indeed through love I have discover true life;
It was an antidote to all maladies though in itself an incurable sore.

Simplicity and mischievousness, forgetfulness and alterness—that is my love.
When seemingly most indifferent in fact she provoketh me most.

Be it the fragrance of a rose or a lament or smoke from the candle,
Whoever left thy parlour was in distress deep.

I had desired to escape the torture of her indifference though I had remained steadfast unto her;
But in her cruelty, she did't agree even to deal the death blow to me.

Your presence pervaded the mirror of my heart,
As the rising sun does the dew-laden morning grass.

O Ghalib! separation's sorrows have rent asunder,
My heart that was the treasure-trove of pearls of wisdom.

Woe betide the intensity of my feelings for her!
For, they impel me to go to her lane only to suffer.

She gave up cruelty after beheading me.
Wonderful! How soon after remores smote her!

Your indifference towards me has exceeded all limits. For how long after all,
Will I relate my tale of woes to you and casually you would say "what?"

If the Preceptor has imprisoned me let him please Himself.
Does He believe that His pressure tactics will make me give up my infatuation for her?

It wasn't destined that I be united with my love.
Had I lived longer, I would have been waiting still!

How could I describe the pleasure of your side-glance at me?
There would have been no hope left, if you had looked at me straight unabashed.

O Ghalib! My love is a source of joy in all forms,
Be it her speech or a gesture or a mere mannerism.

My malady of love didn't suffer the obligation of a treatment,
If I'm not cured, therefore, it is not too bad either.

True I remained a victim of the tyrannies of time;
Still I never failed to think of you.

If there were even friction one could stretch it to mean it
a sign of interest.
How could one be deceived, when there is complete in-
difference!

If I'm hard of hearing, your indulgence should be two fold;
No longer can I comprehend without the word being repeat-
ed twice.

My sighs will need a life-time to achieve results;
Who can wait for your tresses to attain their full length?

I concede that you will not remain indifferent,
But I shall be no more before you take notice of me.

For how long have I been in this deserted world, I couldn't
say,
If I were to take into account the nights of separation
from my love too.

Let me write another letter, before the messenger returns,
I know what her reply will be to my previous one.

When had the cup of wine ever previously in the assembly
reached me!
Today that it has, I fear the *Saqi* may have mixed some-
thing in it.

One stealthy glance of indifference excels a thousand flirta-
tious acts,
And one show of anger surpasses a thousand make-ups.

Only the stupid interpret desire as worship.
What, Do I worship this cruel merciless doll of a woman!

Crying is nothing but covertly making a request, O unkind one!
If I cry, therefore, I'm inviting you to be more cruel and not complaining against it.

She came to my residence, God is great!
For sometime I look at her and for some time at my modest dwelling.

Generally everyone hates one's rival, but with the women of Egypt
Zulaikha is pleased that they too fell in love with Yusuf, the Moon of Canan.

Enviable is his sleep, great his luck and happy his nights
On whose arms your tresses fell and got spread.

To pass life without deep attachment is not feasible
And I haven't much power of endurance left in me to bear the sufferings of love.

Yes' verily she is not God-fearing, nor is she steadfast!
But if one is mindful of one's faith and watchful of one's heart why should one cross her path!

I do not insist that only your love should be reserved for me.
Even if it be your displeasure, I alone should be your victim and no one else.

My grouse is that you thought and talked of my rival,
Though it was by way of disparagement, but even then 'why?'

Ignore me yes, but let not all hope of reconciliation die in me altogether.

This placid glance of your's verily a poison that destroys everything.

Once you fall in love, why should you raise a hue and cry?
If you have lost your heart to live, why should you have a tongue to complain?

If she is not prepared to give up her haughty airs, why must I forsake my manners?
How could I stoop low to enqire: 'Why are you displeased with me?'

What faithfulness, and why talk of love! when it comes to breaking my head,
Why should then O stone-hearted one! be it your thereshold only!

I wish, O friend! I had not cried that much because I knew not
This too would enhance the pain that I had suffered.

Ghalib! I long to meet her and also to relate to her my tale of woe of separation from her.
May that day down when I will be fortunate enough to unburden my heart to her about both.

Ghalib! we will certainly bring to her notice your distressing condition;
But whether she would condescend to call you we cannot vouchsafe.

Don't try to remind me: once you used to address me as your life?

'Cause these days I'm fed up with life itself.

For God's sake do not sever all your connections with me;
It may not be love, I will be quite content with your estrangement even.

You claim my rival is in love with you, let him be!
But then why should I suffer by your indifference and remain faithful to you? I'm not that stupid!

Now that a chance had come to see her, I have become jealous of myself;
That even I myself should see her, I cannot bear this—How unfortunate am I!

With this deep intensity in your thinking you will soon wash your hands of your heart;
The wine is strong enough to melt the glass even.

The mask of unconcern though a sufficient comouflage to hide my love for her,
But so nonplussed do I get in her presence that her discerning eye discovers the truth in no time.

More than contented would I be, if I could see the apple of my eye.
I wonder, if the like of you would ever be among the houries of paradise.

After my death bury me not in your street,
Why should my grave be a sign-post for people to find their way to your lodging?

O ye, the residents of the street, where lives my love?
Pray keep an eye if you could spot poor Ghalib wandering
about in that neighbourhood.

Fire of the inferno could not cause more suffering than the
burns resulting from my suppressed desires.

Her temper I had experienced often ere this too,
But this time her peevishness is more serious, I can see.

Neither there come happy tidings of meeting her nor do
I get a glimpse of her beauty;
Since long my eyes and ears are thus at peace with themselves.

Beauty of the moon when it is full is very absorbing, no
doubt,
But my moon-faced love resplendent like the sun is prettier,
still.

A mere sight of her makes me rediantly pleased;
And lo, she thinks I am restored to health.

If you think my death is not proof enough of my love for
you, matters it not at all,
Should you have yet another test to make, go ahead and
forget about this one.

If reserve and restraint be observed by the two,
Union is no better than separation.
For complete enjoyment, the beloved should be a little
forward and the lover a wee bit wild.

Succeed I will in kissing those lips one day;

All I need is overweaning desire and a devil-may-care
attitude.

Most likely she will appear in my dream to comfort me;
But first let the fever in my heart allow me a wink of sleep.

If he has fallen in love with her, let us not blame him, it
was but natural
He has turned my rival, but he was after all my messenger,
so let him be.

In love there is little difference between life and death;
We live by meeting the same person for whom we die.

EGO

This emaciated body without a shroud is that of Ghalib.
May God bless him, what a non-conformist he was!

In my silence lie suppressed a thousand desires unrealized;
I'm like a burnt-out candle in a dark graveyard.

Of what avail is my friends' sympathy to nurse me in my
distress?
By the time the wounds heal, my nails would have grown
too to scratch them out again.

If the Preceptor wishes to see me He is most welcome.
But will someone please enlighten me what advice after
all He wishes to give me?

If I'm alive today despite your promise of meeting me,
it is because I knew it wasn't true.
Had I trusted you, I would have died of the sheer joy of it.

How explicitly you explain the philosophy of mysticism, O Ghalib!
We would have taken you for a saint, if you were not given to drink.

His creature am I, no doubt yet independent and self-respecting enough,
To come back if the gates of K'aba were not opened unto me voluntarily.

It is long since Ghalib died, but still we remember
His saying every now and then : "I wish, it were like this! !"

You are not the only master of Urdu, O Ghalib!
There lived one Meer also, they say, in the past.

Description of her beauty with my eloquence repeated
Made my confident turn into my rival.

I wish my seat had been this side of '*Arsh*
To permit me to build an observation post of an eminence higher still.

I was never a wise man, nor proficient in any trade;
Why did the stars turn against me without a cause?

They ask : "Who is Ghalib?"
Could someone advise me what reply to give?

When the candle is put out, it emits smoke; it is so.
The fire of love went into mourning after I had passed away.

"Who dares come forward to drink the overpowering wine of love?"
Saqi has now to repeat the call after I'm no more.

Now that I have lost my power of speech, she says :
How am I to know what his desires are unless told about them?"

Even if you are sure of its being heard, never make a request.
If at all, ask for a heart that has no desire.

It reminds me of my countless desires unfulfilled.
Please, my God, do not ask me to render an account of my sins.

I want to borrow just one happy dream from my luck that sleeps;
But O Ghalib! I'm afraid, how shall I repay this debt!

What folly to think the world would follow my example,
To think that excellence wherever found would capture all hearts.

O God! Why is this world bent upon obliterating me out of existence?
On the slate of life I am not a twice-written superfluous word.

My heart is made of flesh and blood and is not a piece of of stone or brick,
I shall cry when I will, let no one taunt me for that!

This is neither a temple nor a mosque nor a saint's tomb,

I'm resting on a highway; why should anyone make me
move away?

She is haughty on account of her station and beauty; and
I'm mindful of my self-respect;
How could I approach her in public, and she would not
invite me to her circle!

If you have acquired the habit of showing indifference to
my sufferings,
I also shall have gradually to learn how to reconcile myself
to the situation.

What we are offered readily in this world and what is
promised in the next is very tempting;
But my self-respect came to my rescue and on principle
I declined both.

I could have exposed the hollowness of *Majnu's* achievements,
Only if I could get some respite from my inner conflicts
which tear me asunder.

SELF

I have been through all vicissitudes of life, Ghalib!
Sudden death is all that now I await.

What a miserable life have I led, O Ghalib!
What reminiscences will I carry : as if I didn't have a God!
to look after me?

It is time I pawned my ministerial robe and praying rug
for wine,

Since long I have not suitably responded to the change
in the season.

Is there anyone who does't know Ghalib?
He is a good poet, though of ill-fame!

SPRINGTIME

Springtime has come with such colour
That even the sun and the moon are among its spectators.

Lo! ye the inhabitants of this earth!
This is verily how the world is embellished!

The earth from end to end has become green,
A thing of envy for the dome of the green sky.

When the greenery did not find a place anywhere,
It took the form of moss on the surface of water.

The eye of narcissus has been given light
Only to see this greenery and flowers.

The air is saturated with intoxicating properties;
To breathe it is nothing short of drinking wine.

TESTAMENT

Ye newcomers in the field of worldly desires!
Beware, if you are fond of song and wine!

Look at me, if you have an eye that can learn a lesson!
Listen to me, if you have an ear that is ready to hear a
piece of advice!

Saqi with her charms is an enemy of faith and intelligence;
And the songstress with her melodious voice waylays anyone's dignity and poise.

What did we see last night? Every nook and corner of the Hall,
Was like the gardener's basket and the florist's bouquet.

There was *Saqi* gliding by and the accordion's charming notes—
One the height of pleasure to watch; and the other music divine.

And the following morning in the same Assembly Hall there was a different story to tell; neither was there the boisterous joy nor lightheartedness of the drunk;
Left over from the revelry of the previous night there was but a heart-broken half-burnt candle and that too lay dead and silent.

These ideas come to me from the Great Unknown,
Ghalib! the screech of my pen is like the whispered melody of the angel Gabriel.

MISCELLANEOUS

So thoroughly did I enjoy her speech that whatever she said,
I imagine as if it was bubbling out from my own heart.

Keep up your prestige, O *Saqi*, and in your generosity let me drink to my fill,
Otherwise drink I do night after night in quantities, small or big whatever I get.

I don't blame you for introducing him to me; but my
friend!
Please do convey my compliments for his shabby behaviour
to the messenger who had gone to her.

It is not enjoined that we should follow in the footsteps of
Khizar;
He was at best a good companion on the journey.

In my dark dungeon the night of sorrows prevails through
and through,
Even the candle the only indication of dawn is dead and
there is nothing left to break the monotony of darkness.

My earthen bowl, if broken, is easy to replace from the
market;
Its superiority even the Goblet of Jamsheed can challenge
not.

I'm replete with grouses like an organ with tunes;
You have only to touch and see the result for yourself.

A wound that can be healed is not for me;
This may please be bestowed upon my rival, O God!

If one seeks deliverance from one's trobles through death,
One's disappointment will be very poignant, if one didn't
die.

For its insistence that it won't come today but nevertheless
won't fail to come some day,
You connot imagine what a grouse I have against death.

Aren't you a bundle of mischief enough to reduce the

world to ruins!
Once you became someone's well-wisher, the evil stars
don't need taking a hand to complete his destruction!

Laws and codes are rightly the bedrock of all social order.
But what can you do with a killer of this type, who doesn't
submit to any discipline?

A word from you, and your tongue may be cut off.
You had better keep listening to what is said.

The Tavern gates and the priest are no doubt poles apart,
O Ghalib!
Nonetheless I know this much that last night he was going
in when I was leaving the place.

O Ghalib! don't object, if the priest called you names;
Is there anyone who can be praised by all?

I feel shy to say so to the *Saqi*, but
The truth is, I'll be quite satisfied with the dregs of the
winecup.

Death overtook me in a foreign land far away from my
country;
God saved me from the disgrace of exposure of being
friendless.



ecem

Malik Ram, one of the forem
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